



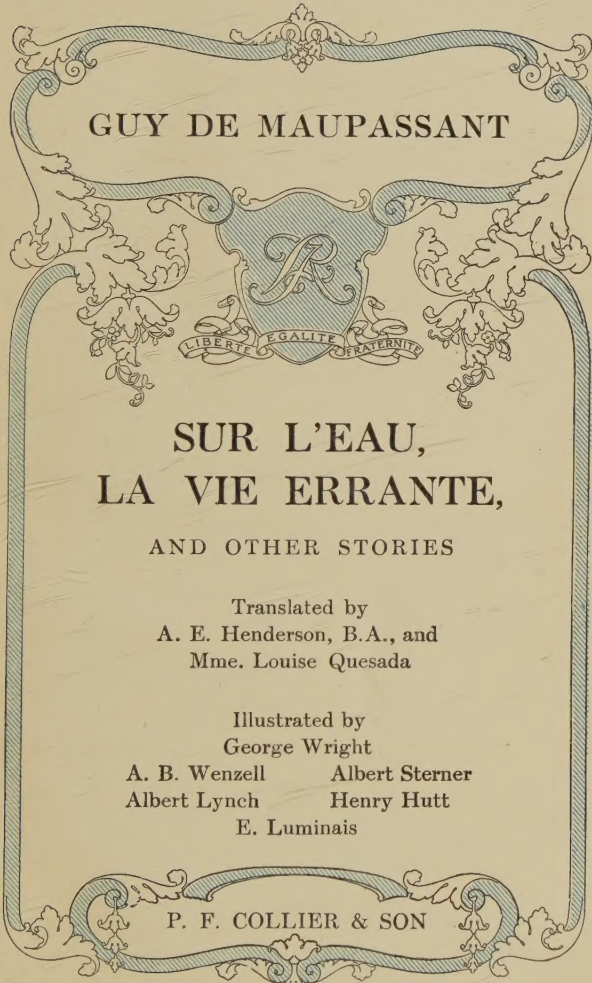


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of the Works of
Guy de Maupassant*



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GUY DE MAUPASSANT



SUR L'EAU,
LA VIE ERRANTE,

AND OTHER STORIES

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OR AFLOAT

This Diary contains no story and no very thrilling adventure. While cruising about on the coasts of the Mediterranean last spring, I amused myself by writing down every day what I saw and what I thought.

I saw but the water, the sun, clouds, and rocks—I can tell of naught else—and my thoughts were mere nothings, such as are suggested by the rocking of the waves, lulling and bearing one along.

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CHAPTER I

April 6th.

I WAS sound asleep, when my skipper Bernard awoke me by throwing sand at my window. I opened it, and on my face, on my chest, I felt the cold, delicious breath of the night. The sky was a clear blue-gray, and alive with the quivering fire of the stars.

The sailor, standing at the foot of the wall, said:

"Fine weather, sir."

"What wind?"

"Off shore."

"Very well, I'm coming."

Half an hour later I was hurrying down to the shore. The horizon was pale with the first rays of dawn, and I saw in the distance behind the Bay des Anges the lights at Nice, and still farther on the revolving lighthouse at Villefranche.

In front of me Antibes was dimly visible through the lifting darkness, with its two towers rising above the cone-shaped town, surrounded by the old walls built by Vauban.

In the streets were a few dogs and a few men, workmen starting off to their daily labor. In the port nothing but the gentle rocking of the boats at the side of the quay and the soft plashing of the scarcely moving water could be heard; or at times

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the sound of the straining of a cable or of a boat grazing against the hull of a vessel. The boats, the flagstones, the sea itself seemed asleep under the gold-spangled firmament, and under the eye of a small lighthouse which, standing out at the end of the jetty, kept watch over its little harbor.

Beyond, in front of Ardouin's building yard, I saw a glimmer, I felt a stir, I heard voices. They were expecting me. The *Bel-Ami* was ready to start.

I went down into the cabin, lighted up by a couple of candles hanging and swinging like two compasses, at the foot of the sofas which at night were used as beds. I donned the leathern sailor's jacket, put on a warm cap, and returned on deck. Already the hawsers had been cast off, and the two men hauling in the cable had brought the anchor apeak. Then they hoisted the big sail, which went up slowly to the monotonous groan of blocks and rigging. It rose wide and wan in the darkness of the night, quivering in the breath of the wind, hiding from us both sky and stars.

The breeze was coming dry and cold from the invisible mountain that one felt to be still laden with snow. It came very faint, as though hardly awake, undecided and intermittent.

Then the men shipped the anchor, I seized the helm, and the boat, like a big ghost, glided through the still waters. In order to get out of the port, we had to tack between the sleeping tartans and schooners. We went gently from one quay to another, dragging after us our little short, round dingey, which followed us as a cygnet, just hatched from its shell, follows the parent swan.

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As soon as we reached the channel between the jetty and the square fort, the yacht became livelier, quickened its pace, and seemed more alert, as though a joyous feeling had taken possession of her. She danced over the countless short waves—moving furrows of a boundless plain. Leaving the dead waters of the harbor, she now felt under her the living sea.

There was no swell, and I directed our course between the walls of the town and the buoy called *Cinq-cents francs*, that marks the deeper channel; then, catching the breeze astern, I made sail to double the headland.

The day was breaking, the stars were disappearing, for the last time the Villefranche lighthouse closed its revolving eye, and I saw strange roseate glimmers in the distant sky, above the still invisible Nice, the heights of the Alpine glaciers lighted up by the early dawn. I gave the helm over to Bernard, and watched the rising sun. The freshened breeze sent us skimming over the quivering, violet-tinted waters. A bell clanged, throwing to the wind the three rapid strokes of the Angelus. How is it that the sound of bells seems livelier in the early dawn, and duller at nightfall? I like that chill and keen hour of morn, when man still sleeps and all nature is awakening. The air is full of mysterious thrills unknown to belated risers. I inhale, I drink it; I see the rebirth of life, the material life of the world; the life that runs through all the planets, the secret of which is our eternal problem.

Raymond said:

"We shall soon have the wind from the east."

Bernard replied:

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"More likely from the west."

The skipper Bernard is lean and lithe, remarkably clean, careful and prudent. Bearded up to his eyes, he has a frank look and a kindly voice. He is devoted and trusty. But everything makes him anxious at sea; a sudden swell that foretells a breeze out in the open, a long cloud over the Esterel Mountains announcing a *mistral* to westward, even a rising barometer, for that may indicate a squall from the east. Moreover, a capital sailor, he exercises a constant supervision and carries cleanliness to such an extent as to rub up the brasses the moment a drop of water touches them.

His brother-in-law, Raymond, is a strong fellow, swarthy and mustached, indefatigable and bold, as loyal and devoted as the other, but less variable and nervous, more calm, more resigned to the surprises and treachery of the sea. Bernard, Raymond and the barometer are sometimes in contradiction with each other, and perform an amusing comedy with three personages, of which one, the best informed, is dumb.

"Dash it, sir, we're sailing well," said Bernard.

We had, it was true, passed through the Gulf of La Salis, cleared La Garoupe, and were approaching Cape Gros, a flat, low rock stretching out on a level with the water.

Now, the whole Alpine mountain range appeared, a monster wave threatening the sea, a granite wave capped with snow, where each pointed tip looks like a dash of spray motionless and frozen. And the sun rises behind this ice, shedding over it the light of its molten silver rays.

Then, directly after, as we round the Antibes

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headland, we discover the Lerins Isles, and farther off behind them the tortuous outline of the Esterel. The Esterel is the stage scenery of Cannes, a lovely keepsake kind of mountain of faintest blue, elegantly outlined in a coquettish and yet artistic style, washed in water colors on a theatrical sky by a good-natured Creator for the express purpose of serving as model for amateur landscape painters.

With each hour of the day, the Esterel changes its aspect, and charms the gaze of the upper ten.

In the morning the chain of mountains, correctly and clearly cut out, is sharply delineated on a blue sky; a tender and pure blue, the ideal blue of a southern shore. But in the evening the wooded sides of the slopes darken and become a black patch on a fiery sky, on a sky incredibly red and dramatic. Never have I seen elsewhere such fairylike sunsets, such conflagrations of the whole horizon, such an effulgence of clouds, such a clever and superb arrangement, such a daily renewal of extravagant and magnificent effects which call forth admiration, but would raise a smile were they painted by men.

The Lerins Isles, which, to the east, close the Gulf of Cannes and separate it from the Gulf of Juan, look themselves like two operatic islands placed there for the satisfaction and delight of invalids and winter sojourners.

Seen from the open sea, where we now are, they resemble two dark-green gardens growing in the water. Out at sea, at the extreme end of Saint-Honorat, stands a romantic ruin, its walls rising out of the waves, like one of Walter Scott's castles, ever beaten by the surf, and in which, in former days, the monks defended themselves against the

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Saracens; for Saint-Honorat always belonged to monks, except during the Revolution. At that period the island was purchased by an actress of the Comédie-Française.

Stronghold, militant monks, now toned down into the fattest of smilingly begging Trappists, pretty actress, come thither, no doubt, to conceal her love affairs in the dense thickets and pines of this rock-belted islet—all, down to the very names, "Lerins, Saint-Honorat, Sainte-Marguerite," fit for Florian's fables, all is pleasing, coquettish, romantic, poetic, and rather insipid on the delightful shores of Cannes.

To correspond with the antique manor, embattled, slender and erect, which looks toward the open sea at the extremity of Saint-Honorat, Sainte-Marguerite is terminated on the land side by the celebrated fortress in which the Man in the Iron Mask and Bazaine were confined. A channel about a mile long stretches out between the headland of the Croisette and the fortress, which has the aspect of an old squat house, devoid of anything imposing or majestic. It seems to crouch down, dull and crafty, a real trap for prisoners.

I can now see the three gulfs. In front, beyond the islands, lies that of Cannes; nearer, the Gulf of Juan, and behind the Bay des Anges, overtopped by the Alps and the snowy heights. Farther off, the coasts can be seen far beyond the Italian frontier, and with my glasses I can sight at the end of a promontory the white houses of Bordighera.

And everywhere, all along the endless coast, the towns by the seashore, the villages perched up on high on the mountainside, the innumerable villas

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dotted about in the greenery, all look like white eggs laid on the sands, on the rocks, among the pine forests by gigantic birds that have come in the night from the snowlands far above.

More villas on the Cape of Antibes, a long tongue of land, a wonderful garden thrown out between the seas, blooming with the most lovely flowers of Europe, and at the extreme point Eileen Rock, a charming and whimsical residence that attracts visitors from Cannes and Nice.

The breeze has dropped, the yacht hardly makes any progress. After the land wind that lasts all night, we are waiting and hoping for a sea breeze, which will be most welcome, wherever it may blow from.

Bernard still believes in a west wind, Raymond in an east one, and the barometer remains motionless at a little above 76.

The sun, now radiant, overspreads the earth, making the walls of the houses gleam from afar like scattered snow, and sheds over the sea a light varnish of luminous blue.

Little by little, taking advantage of the faintest breath, of those caresses of the air which one can hardly feel on the skin, but which, nevertheless, drive sensitive, well-trimmed yachts through the still waters, we sail beyond the last point of the headland, and the whole Gulf of Juan, with the squadron in the centre of it, lies before us.

From afar, the ironclads look like rocks, islets, and reefs covered with dead trees. The smoke of a train runs along the shore between Cannes and Juan-les-Pins, which will perhaps become later on the prettiest place on the whole coast.

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Three tartans, with their lateen sails, one red, and the other two white, are detained in the channel between Sainte-Marguerite and the mainland.

All is still, the soft and warm calm of a spring morning in the south; and already it seems to me as if it were weeks, months, years since I left the talking, busy world; I feel arise within me the intoxication of solitude, the sweet delight of a rest that nothing will disturb, neither the white letter, nor the blue telegram, nor the bell at my door, nor the bark of my dog. I cannot be sent for, invited, carried off, overwhelmed by sweet smiles, or tormented with civilities. I am alone, really alone, really free. The smoke of the train runs along the coast; while I float in a winged home that is rocked and cradled; pretty as a bird, tiny as a nest, easier than a hammock, wandering over the waters at the caprice of the wind, independent and free! To attend to me and sail my boat, I have two sailors at my call, and books and provisions for a fortnight.

A whole fortnight without speaking, what joy! Overcome by the heat of the sun, I closed my eyes, enjoying the deep repose of the sea, when Bernard said in an undertone:

"The brig over yonder has a good breeze."

Over yonder, far away in front of Agay, a brig was in fact advancing toward us; I could distinctly see with my glasses her round sails filled by the wind.

"Pooh, it's the breeze from Agay," answered Raymond; "it is calm round Cape Roux."

"Talk away; we shall have a west wind," replied Bernard.

I leaned over to look at the barometer in the

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saloon. It had fallen during the last half hour. I told Bernard, who smiled and whispered:

"It feels like a westerly wind, sir."

And now my curiosity awakens; the curiosity peculiar to all those who wander over the sea, which makes them see everything, notice everything, and take an interest in the smallest detail. My glasses no longer leave my eyes; I look at the color of the water on the horizon. It remains clear, glazed, glistening. If there is a breeze, it is still far off.

What a personage the wind is for the sailors! They speak of it as of a man, an all-powerful sovereign, sometimes terrible and sometimes kindly. It is the main topic of conversation all day long, and it is the subject of one's incessant thoughts throughout the days and the nights. You land folk know it not! As for us, we know it better than our father or our mother, the invisible, the terrible, the capricious, the sly, the treacherous, the devouring tyrant. We love it and we dread it; we know its maliciousness and its anger, which the warnings in the heavens or in the depths slowly teach us to anticipate. It forces us to think of it at every minute, at every second, for the struggle between it and us is indeed ceaseless. All our being is on the alert for the battle; our eye, to detect undiscernible appearances; our skin, to feel its caress or its blow; our spirit, to recognize its mood, foresee its caprices, judge whether it is calm or wayward. No enemy, no woman, gives us such an intense sensation of struggle, nor compels us to use so much foresight; for it is the master of the sea, it is that thing which we may avoid, make use of, or flee from, but which we can never subdue. And there reigns in the soul

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of a sailor, as in that of a believer, the idea of an irascible and formidable God, the mysterious, religious, infinite fear of the wind, and respect for its power.

"Here it comes, sir," Bernard said to me.

Far away, very far away, at the end of the horizon, a blue-black line lengthens out on the water. It is nothing, a shade, an imperceptible shadow; it is the wind. Now we await it motionless, under the heat of the sun.

I look at the time, eight o'clock, and I say:

"Bless me, it is early for the westerly wind."

"It will blow hard in the afternoon," replied Bernard.

I raised my eyes to the sail hanging flat, limp and inert. Its great triangle seemed to reach up to the sky, for we had hoisted on the foremast the great fair-weather gaff topsail, and its yard overtopped the masthead by quite two yards. All is motionless; we might be on land. The barometer is still falling. However, the dark line perceived afar approaches. The metallic lustre of the waters is suddenly dimmed and transformed into a slaty shade. The sky is pure and cloudless.

Suddenly, around us the polished surface of the sea is rippled by imperceptible shivers gliding rapidly over it, appearing but to be effaced, as though it were riddled by a rain of thousands of little pinches of sand.

The sail quivers slightly, and presently the main boom slowly lurches over to starboard. A light breath now kisses my face, and the shivers on the water increase around us, as though the rain of sand had become continuous. The cutter begins to

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move forward. She glides on upright, and a slight splash makes itself heard along her sides. I feel the tiller stiffen in my hand, that long brass cross-bar which looks in the sun like a fiery stem, and the breeze steadily increases. We shall have to tack, but what matter? The boat sails close to the wind, and if the breeze holds, we shall be able to beat up to Saint-Raphaël before the sun goes down.

We now approach the squadron whose six iron-clads and two dispatch boats turn slowly at their anchors, with their bows to the west. Then we tack toward the open sea, to pass the Formigues rocks, which are marked by a tower in the middle of the gulf. The breeze freshens more and more with surprising rapidity, and the waves rise up short and choppy. The yacht bends low under her full set of sails, and runs on, followed by the dingey, which with stretched-out painter is hurried through the foam, her nose in the air and stern in the water.

On nearing the island of Saint-Honorat we pass by a naked rock, red and bristling like a porcupine, so rugged, so armed with teeth, points and claws as to be well-nigh impossible of access; and one must advance with precaution, placing one's feet in the hollows between the tusks: it is called Saint-Ferréol.

A little earth, come from no one knows where, has accumulated in the holes and crevasses of the rock, and lilies grow in it, and beautiful blue irises, from seeds which seem to have fallen from heaven.

It is on this strange reef, in the open sea, that for five years lay buried and unknown the body of Paganini. The adventure is worthy of this artist, whose queer character, at once genial and weird,

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gave him the reputation of being possessed by the devil, and who, with his odd appearance in body and face, his marvellous talent and excessive emaciation, has become an almost legendary being, a sort of Hoffmannesque phantasm.

As he was on his way home to Genoa, his native town, accompanied by his son, who alone could hear him now, so weak had his voice become, he died at Nice of cholera, on the 27th of May, 1840.

The son at once took the body of his father on board a ship and set sail for Italy. But the Genoese clergy refused to give burial to the demoniac. The court of Rome was consulted, but dared not grant the authorization. The body was, however, about to be disembarked, when the municipality made opposition, under the pretext that the artist had died of cholera. Genoa was at that time ravaged by an epidemic of this disease, and it was argued that the presence of this new corpse might possibly aggravate the evil.

Paganini's son then returned to Marseilles, where entrance to the port was refused him for the same reasons. He then went on to Cannes, where he could not penetrate either.

He therefore remained at sea, and the waves rocked the corpse of the fantastic artist, everywhere repelled by men. He no longer knew what to do, where to go, on which spot to lay the dead body so sacred to him, when he espied the naked rock of Saint-Ferréol in the midst of the billows. There at last he landed the coffin, and buried it in the centre of the islet.

It was only in 1845 that he went back with two

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of his friends to take up the remains of his father, and transfer them to Genoa to the Villa Gajona.

Would one not have preferred that the wonderful violinist should have remained at rest upon the bristling reef, cradled by the song of the waves as they break on the torn and craggy rock?

Farther on, in the open sea, rises the castle of Saint-Honorat, which we had already perceived as we rounded the Cape of Antibes, and farther on still, a line of reefs ended by a tower called "Les Moines."

They are now quite white with surf and echoing with the roar of the breakers.

They form one of the most dangerous perils of the coast during the night, for they are marked by no light, and they are the cause of frequent wrecks.

A sudden gust keels us over, so that the water washes the deck, and I give orders for the gaff topsail to be lowered, the cutter being no longer able to carry it without endangering the safety of the mast.

The waves sink, swell and whiten; the wind whistles, angry and squally—a threatening wind, which cries, "Take care!"

"We shall have to go and sleep at Cannes," said Bernard.

And, in fact, at the end of half an hour, we had to lower the standing jib, and replace it by a smaller one, taking a reef in the sail at the same time; then a quarter of an hour later we had to take in a second reef. Thereupon I decided to make for the harbor at Cannes, a dangerous harbor, without shelter; a roadstead open to the southwesterly sea, where the ships are in constant danger. When one thinks

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what a considerable amount of wealth would accrue to the town by the large number of foreign yachts that would flock there were they certain of finding a proper shelter, one understands how inveterate must be the indolence of this southern population, who have not yet been able to obtain from government such indispensable works. At ten o'clock we dropped anchor opposite the steamboat *Le Cannois*, and I landed, thoroughly disappointed at the interruption of my trip. The whole roadstead was white with foam.

CHAPTER II

CANNES, *April 7th, 9 P.M.*

Princes, princes, everywhere princes. They who love princes are indeed happy.

No sooner had I set foot yesterday morning on the promenade of the Croisette than I met three, one behind the other. In our democratic country, Cannes has become the city of titles.

If one could open minds in the same manner as one lifts the cover off a saucepan, one would find figures in the brain of the mathematician; outlines of actors gesticulating and declaiming in a theatrical author's head; the form of a woman in that of a lover's; licentious pictures in that of a rake; verses in the brain of a poet; and in the cranium of the folk who come to Cannes there would be found coronets of every description, floating about like vermicelli in soup.

Some men gather together in gambling houses because they are fond of cards, others meet on race

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courses because they are fond of horses. People gather together at Cannes because they love imperial and royal highnesses.

There they are at home, and, in default of the kingdoms of which they have been dispossessed, reign peacefully in the salons of the faithful.

Great and small, poor and rich, sad and gay, all are to be found, according to taste. In general they are modest, strive to please, and show in their intercourse with humbler mortals a delicacy and affability that is hardly ever found in our own *députés*, those princes of the ballot.

However, if the princelings, the poor wandering princes without subjects or civil list, who come to live in homely fashion in this town of flowers and elegance, affect simplicity, and do not lay themselves open to ridicule, even from those most disrespectfully inclined, such is not the case with regard to the worshippers of highnesses.

These latter circle round their idols with an eagerness at once religious and comical; and directly they are deprived of one, they fly off in quest of another, as though their mouths could only open to say "Monseigneur" or "Madame," and speak in the third person.

They cannot be with you five minutes without telling you what the princess replied, what the grand duke said; the promenade planned with the one, the witty saying of the other. One feels, one sees, one guesses that they frequent no other society but that of persons of royal blood, and if they deign to speak to you, it is in order to inform you exactly of what takes place on these heights.

What relentless struggles, struggles in which

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every possible ruse is employed in order to have at one's table, at least once during the season, a prince, a real prince, one of those at a premium. What respect one inspires when one has met a grand duke at lawn tennis, or when one has merely been presented to Wales—as the dandies say.

To write down one's name at the door of these "exiles," as Daudet calls them, of these broken-down princes, as others would say, creates a constant delicate, absorbing, and engrossing occupation. The visitors' book lies open in the hall between a couple of lackeys, one of whom proffers a pen. One inscribes one's name at the tag end of some two thousand names of every sort and description, among which titles swarm and the noble particle "de" abounds! After which, one goes off with the haughty air of a man just ennobled, as happy as one who has accomplished a sacred duty, and one proudly says to the first person met: "I have just written down my name at the Grand Duke of Gerolstein's!" Then, in the evening, at dinner, one says in an important tone: "I noticed just now, on the Grand Duke of Gerolstein's list, the names of X—, Y—, and Z—." And every one is interested and listens as if the event were of the greatest importance.

But why laugh and be astonished at the harmless and innocent mania of the elegant admirers of princes, when we meet in Paris fifty different races of hero worshippers who are in no wise less amusing?

Whoever has a salon must needs have some celebrities to show there, and a hunt is organized in order to secure them. There is hardly a woman

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in society and of the best who is not anxious to have her artist or her artists; and she will give dinners for them in order that the whole world may know that hers is a clever set.

Between affecting to possess the wit one has not, but which one summons with a flourish of trumpets, or affecting princely intimacies—where is the difference?

Among the great men most sought after by women, old and young, are most assuredly musicians. Some houses possess a complete collection of them. Moreover, these artists possess the inestimable advantage of being useful at evening parties. However, people who desire a superlative *rara avis* can hardly hope to bring two together in the same room. We may add that there is not a meanness of which any woman, a leader of society, is not capable, in order to embellish her salon with a celebrated composer. The delicate attentions usually employed to secure a painter or only a literary man become quite inadequate when the subject is a tradesman of sounds. For him allurements and praise hitherto unknown are employed. His hands are kissed like those of a king, he is worshipped as a god, when he has deigned to execute his "Regina Cœli." A hair of his beard is worn in a ring; a button fallen from his breeches one evening in a violent movement of his arm, during the execution of the grand finale of his "Doux Repos," becomes a medal, a sacred medal worn in the bosom, hanging from a golden chain.

Painters are of less value, although still rather sought after. They are not so divine, and more bohemian. Their manners are less courteous and,

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above all, not sufficiently sublime. They often replace inspiration by broad jests and silly puns. They carry with them too much of the perfume of the studio, and those who by dint of watchfulness have managed to get rid of it, only exchange one atmosphere for another, that of affectation. And then they are a fickle, light, and bragging set. No one is certain of keeping them long, whereas the musician builds his nest in the family circle.

Of late years the literary man has been sought after. He presents many great advantages: he talks, he talks lengthily, he talks a great deal, his conversation suits every kind of public, and as his profession is to be intelligent, he can be listened to and admired with all security.

The woman who is possessed with the mania for having at her house a literary man, just as one would have a parrot whose chatter should attract all the neighboring *concierges*, has to take her choice between poets and novelists. There is more of the ideal about the poet, more spontaneity about the novelist. The poets are more sentimental, the novelists more positive. It is a matter of taste and constitution. The poet has more charm, the novelist has often more wit. But the novelist presents dangers that are not met with in the poet: he pries, pillages, and makes capital of all he sees. With him there is no tranquillity, no certainty that he will not some day lay you bare in the pages of a book. His eye is like a pump that sucks up everything, like the hand of a thief that is always at work. Nothing escapes him; he gathers and picks up ceaselessly; he notices the movements, the gestures, the intentions, the slightest incidents and

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events; he picks up the smallest words, the smallest actions, the smallest thing. He makes stock from morning till night of these observations, out of which he will make a good, telling story, a story that will make the round of the world, which will be read, discussed, commented upon by thousands and thousands of people. And the most terrible part of all is that the wretch cannot help drawing striking portraits, in spite of himself, unconsciously, because he sees things as they are, and he must relate what he sees. Notwithstanding the cunning he uses in disguising his personages, it will be said: "Did you recognize Mr. X—— and Mrs. Y——? They are striking resemblances."

It is assuredly as dangerous for people in good society to invite and make much of novelists as it would be for a miller to breed rats in his mill.

And yet they are held in great favor.

When, therefore, a woman has fixed her choice on the writer she intends to adopt, she lays siege to him by means of every variety of compliments, attractions and indulgence. Like water which, drop by drop, slowly wears away the hardest rock, the fulsome praise falls at each word on the impressionable heart of the literary man. Then, when she sees that he is moved, touched, and won by the constant flattery, she isolates him, severing, little by little, the ties he may have elsewhere, and imperceptibly accustoms him to come to her house, make himself happy, and there enshrine his thoughts. In order the more thoroughly to acclimatize him in her house, she paves the way for his success, brings him forward, sets him in relief, and displays for him, be-

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fore all the old *habitués* of the household, marked consideration and boundless admiration.

At last, realizing that he is now an idol, he remains in the temple. He finds, moreover, that the position affords him every advantage, for all the other women lavish their most delicate favors upon him to entice him away from his conqueror. If, however, he is clever, he will not hearken to the entreaties and coquetries with which he is overwhelmed. And the more faithful he appears, the more he will be sought after, implored and loved. Ah! let him beware of allowing these drawing-room sirens to entice him away; he will immediately lose two-thirds of his value if he once becomes public property.

Soon he forms a literary circle, a church of which he is the deity, the only deity, for true faiths never have more than one god. People will flock to the house to see him, to hear him, to admire him, as one comes from afar to visit certain shrines. He will be envied! She will be envied! They will converse upon literature as priests talk of dogmas, scientifically and solemnly; they will be listened to, both the one and the other, and on leaving this literary salon, one will feel as though one were quitting a cathedral.

Other men are also sought after, but in a lesser degree; for instance, generals, who, neglected by society and not held in much greater consideration than *députés*, are yet in demand among the middle classes. The *député* is only in request at moments of crises. He is kept on hand for a dinner now and then during a parliamentary lull. The scholar has also his artisans—every variety of taste exists in

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nature; and a clerk in an office is highly esteemed by folk who live up six pairs of stairs. However, this sort of people do not come to Cannes; there are only a few timid representatives to be seen of the middle class.

It is only in the forenoon that the noble visitors are to be met on the Croisette.

The Croisette is a long semi-circular promenade that follows the line of the beach, from the headland in front of Sainte-Marguerite down to the harbor overlooked by the old town.

Young and slender women—it is good style to be thin—dressed in the English fashion, walk along with rapid step, escorted by active young men in lawn-tennis suits. But from time to time appears some poor emaciated creature, dragging himself along with languid step, and leaning on the arm of a mother, brother or sister. He coughs and gasps, poor thing, wrapped up in shawls notwithstanding the heat, and watches us, as we pass, with deep, despairing and envious glances.

He suffers and dies, for this charming and balmy country is the hospital of society and the flowery cemetery of aristocratic Europe.

The terrible disease which never relents, and is now called tuberculosis, the disease that gnaws, burns and destroys men by thousands, seems to have chosen this coast on which to finish off its victims.

How truly in every part of the world this lovely and terrible spot must be accursed, this anteroom of death, perfumed and sweet, where so many humble and royal families, burghers or princes, have left some one, some child on whom they concentrated all

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their hopes and lavished all their love and tenderness.

I call to mind Mentone, the warmest and healthiest of these winter residences. Even, as in warlike cities, the fortresses can be seen standing out on the surrounding heights, so in this region of moribunds the cemetery is visible on the summit of a hill.

What a spot it would be for the living, that garden where the dead lie asleep! Roses, roses, everywhere roses. They are blood red, or pale, or white, or streaked with veins of scarlet. The tombs, the paths, the places still unoccupied and which to-morrow will be filled, all are covered with them. Their strong perfume brings giddiness, making both head and legs falter.

And all those who lie there were but sixteen, eighteen or twenty years of age.

One wanders on from tomb to tomb, reading the names of those youthful victims, killed by the implacable disease. 'Tis a children's cemetery, a cemetery similar to the young girls' balls where no married couples are admitted.

From the cemetery the view extends to the left in the direction of Italy as far as the Bordighera headland, where the white houses stretch out into the sea; and to the right, as far as Cape Martin, which dips its leafy coast in the water.

Nevertheless all around, all along these delightful shores, we are in the home of Death. But it is discreet, veiled, full of tact and bashfulness, well bred in fact. Never does one meet it face to face, although at every moment it passes near.

It might even be thought that no one dies in this country, so thorough is the complicity of deceit in

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which this sovereign revels. But how it is felt, how it is detected; how often a glimpse is caught of its black robes! Truly all the roses and the orange blossoms are requisite to prevent the breeze being laden with the dread smell which is exhaled from the chamber of death.

Never is a coffin seen in the streets, never any funeral trappings, never is a death-knell heard. Yesterday's emaciated pedestrian no longer passes beneath your window, and that is all. If you are astonished at no longer seeing him, and inquire after him, the landlord and servants tell you with a smile that he had got better and by the doctor's advice had left for Italy. In each hotel Death has its secret stairs, its confidants and its accomplices. A philosopher of olden times would have said many fine things upon the contrast of the elegance and misery which here elbow one another.

It is twelve o'clock, the promenade is now deserted, and I return on board the *Bel-Ami*, where awaits me an unpretending breakfast prepared by Raymond, whom I find dressed up in a white apron, frying potatoes.

All the remainder of the day I read.

The wind was still blowing violently, and the yacht danced between her anchors, for we had been obliged to lower the starboard anchor also. The motion ended by benumbing me, and I fell into a long doze. When Bernard came into the cabin to light the candles it was seven o'clock, and as the surf along the quay made landing difficult, I dined on board.

After dinner I went up and sat in the open air. Around me Cannes stretched forth her many lights.

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Nothing can be prettier than a town lighted up and seen from the sea. On the left the old quarter, with its houses that seemed to climb one upon the other, mingled its lights with that of the stars; on the right the gas lamps of the Croisette extended like an enormous serpent a mile and a half long.

And then I reflected that in all the villas, in all the hotels people were gathered together this evening as they were last night, as they will be tomorrow, and that they are talking. Talking! about what? the princes! the weather! And then?—the weather!—the princes!—and then—about nothing!

Can anything be more dreary than *table d'hôte* conversation? I have lived in hotels, I have endured the emptiness of the human soul as it is there laid bare. In truth, one must be hedged in by the most determined indifference not to weep with grief, disgust and shame when one hears men talk. Man, the ordinary man, rich, known, esteemed, respected, held in consideration, is satisfied with himself, and he knows nothing, he understands nothing, yet he talks of intelligence as though he knew all about it.

How blinded and intoxicated we must be by our foolish pride, to fancy ourselves anything more than animals scarcely superior to other animals. Listen to them, the fools, seated round the table! They are talking! Talking with gentle, confiding ingenuousness, and they imagine that they are exchanging ideas! What ideas? They say where they have been walking: "It was a very pretty walk, but rather cold coming home"; "the cooking is not bad in the hotel, although hotel food is always rather spicy." And they relate what they have done, what they like, what they believe.

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I fancy I behold the deformity of their souls as a monstrous foetus in a jar of alcohol. I assist at the slow birth of the commonplace sayings they constantly repeat; I watch the words as they drop from the granary of stupidity into their imbecile mouths, and from their mouths into the inert atmosphere which bears them to my ears.

But their ideas, their noblest, most solemn, most respected ideas, are they not the unimpeachable proof of the omnipotence of stupidity—eternal, universal, indestructible stupidity?

All their conceptions of God, an awkward deity, whose first creations are such failures that He must needs re-create them, a deity who listens to our secrets and notes them down, a God who, in turn, policeman, Jesuit, lawyer, gardener, is conceived, now in cuirass, now in robes, now in wooden shoes; then the negations of God based upon pure terrestrial logic, the arguments for and against, the history of religious beliefs, of schisms, heresies, philosophies, the affirmations as well as the doubts, the puerility of principles, the ferocious and bloody violence of the originators of hypotheses, the utter chaos of contestation; in short, every miserable effort of this wretchedly impotent being man, impotent in conception, in imagination, in knowledge, all prove that he was thrown upon this absurdly small world for the sole purpose of eating, drinking, manufacturing children and little songs, and killing his neighbor by way of pastime.

Happy are those whom life satisfies, who enjoy it and are content.

There are some such who, easily pleased, are delighted with everything. They love the sun and the

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rain, the snow and the fog; they love festivities as well as the calm of their own homes; they love all they see, all they do, all they say, all they hear.

They lead either an easy life, quiet and satisfied, amid their offspring, or a restless existence, full of pleasures and amusements.

In neither case are they dull.

Life, for them, is an amusing kind of play, in which they are themselves the actors; an excellent and varied show, which though offering nothing unexpected, thoroughly delights them.

Other men, however, who run through at a glance the narrow circle of human satisfaction, remain undismayed before the emptiness of happiness, the monotony and poverty of earthly joys!

As soon as they have reached thirty years of age all is ended for them. What have they to expect? Nothing new can interest them; they have made the circuit of our meagre pleasures.

Happy are those who know not the disgust for the same acts constantly repeated; happy are those who have the strength to recommence each day the same task, with the same gestures, amid the same furniture, in front of the same horizon. Under the same horizon, under the same sky, to go out in the same streets, where they meet the same faces and the same animals. Happy are those who do not perceive with unutterable disgust that nothing changes and that all is weariness.

We must indeed have a limited, sluggish intellect to be so easily pleased and satisfied with what is. How is it that the world audience has not yet called out, "Curtain," has not yet demanded the next act, with other beings than mankind, other manners,

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other pleasures, other plants, other planets, other inventions, other adventures?

Is it possible no one has yet felt a loathing for the sameness of the human face, of the animals who, in their unvarying instincts, transmitted in their seed from the first to the last of their stock, seem to be but living machinery; a hatred of landscapes eternally the same and of pleasures never varied?

Console yourself, it is said, with the love of science and art.

But is it not evident that we are always shut up in ourselves, without ever being able to quit ourselves, forever condemned to drag the chains of our wingless dream?

All the progress made by our cerebral effort consists in establishing material facts by means of instruments ridiculously imperfect, which, however, make up in a certain degree for the inefficiency of our organs. Every twenty years some unhappy inquirer, who generally dies in the attempt, discovers that the atmosphere contains a gas hitherto unknown; that an imponderable, inexplicable, unqualifiable force can be obtained by rubbing a piece of wax on cloth; that among the innumerable unknown stars there is one that has not yet been noticed, in the immediate vicinity of another which had not only been observed, but even designated by name, for many years. What matter?

Our diseases are due to microbes? Very well. But where do those microbes come from and the diseases of these invisible ones? And the suns, whence come they?

We know nothing, we understand nothing, we can do nothing, we foresee nothing, we imagine

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nothing, we are shut up, imprisoned in ourselves. And there are people who marvel at the genius of humanity!

Art? Painting consists in reproducing in colors monotonous landscapes which seldom resemble nature, in portraying men and striving to make them look like the originals, without ever succeeding. Obstinate and uselessly one struggles to imitate what is; and the result is a motionless and dumb copy of the actions of life, which is barely comprehensible even to the educated eye that one has sought to attract.

Wherefore such efforts? Wherefore such a vain imitation? Wherefore this trivial reproduction of things in themselves so dull? How petty!

Poets do with words what painters try to do with colors. Again, wherefore?

When one has read four of the most talented, of the most ingenious authors, it is idle to open another. And nothing more can be learned. They also, these men, can but imitate men. They exhaust themselves in sterile labor. For as man does not change, their useless art is immutable. Ever since our poor minds have awakened man is the same; his sentiments, his beliefs, his sensations are the same. He has neither advanced nor retrograded; he has never moved. Of what use is it to me to learn what I am, to read what I think, to see myself portrayed in the trivial adventures of a novel?

Ah! if poets could vanquish space, explore the planets, discover other worlds, other beings; vary unceasingly for my mind the nature and form of things, convey me constantly through a changeful and surprising Unknown, open for me mysterious

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gates in unexpected and marvellous horizons, I would read them night and day. But, impotent as they are, they can but change the place of a word, and show me my own image, as the painters do. Of what use is all this?

For man's thought is motionless.

And the precise limits, so nigh, so insurmountable, once attained, it turns like a horse in a circus, like a fly shut up in a bottle, fluttering against the sides and uselessly dashing itself against them.

And yet, for want of any better occupation, thought is always a solace, when one lives alone.

On this little boat rocked by the sea, that a wave could fill and upset, I know, I feel, how true it is that nothing of all we know really exists, for the earth which floats in empty space is even more isolated, more lost than this skiff on the billows. Their importance is the same; their destiny will be accomplished. And I rejoice at understanding the nothingness of the belief and the vanity of the hopes which our insect-like pride has begotten.

I went to bed, cradled by the pitching of the boat, and slept profoundly, as one sleeps at sea, till the moment when Bernard awoke me to say:

"Bad weather, sir; we cannot sail this morning." The wind had fallen, but the sea, very rough in the open, would not allow of our making sail for Saint-Raphaël.

Another day to be spent at Cannes!

At about twelve o'clock a westerly wind again got up, less strong than the day before, and I resolved to take advantage of it and visit the squadron in Gulf Juan.

In crossing the roads the *Bel-Ami* jumped about

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like a goat, and I had to steer very carefully in order to avoid, with each wave which took us broadsides, having a mass of water dashed in my face. Soon, however, I was sheltered by the islands and entered the channel under the fortress of Sainte-Marguerite.

Its straight wall stretches down to the rocks, washed by the waves, and its summit hardly overtops the slightly elevated coast of the island. It is somewhat like a head buried between two high shoulders.

The spot where Bazaine climbed down can be easily made out.

It was not necessary to be much of a gymnast to slide down those accommodating rocks.

The escape was related to me with every detail by a man who pretended to be, and probably was, thoroughly well informed.

Bazaine was allowed a good deal of liberty, his wife and children being permitted to come and see him every day. Madame Bazaine, who was an energetic woman, declared to her husband that she would leave him forever and carry off the children if he would not make his escape, and she explained her plan. He hesitated at first, on account of the danger of the flight and the doubtfulness of success, but when he saw that his wife was determined to carry out her plan, he consented.

Thereupon every day some toys for the little ones were brought into the fortress, among others an entire set of appliances for drawing-room gymnastics. Out of these toys was made the knotted rope that the marshal was to make use of. It was very slowly made, in order to give rise to no suspicion,

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and when finished it was hid away by a friendly hand in a corner of the prison yard.

The date of the flight was then decided upon. They chose a Sunday, the supervision appearing to be less rigorous on that day.

Madame Bazaine then absented herself for a few days.

The marshal usually walked about in the yard till eight o'clock in the evening, in company with the governor of the prison, a pleasant man whose agreeable conversation was a resource to Bazaine. Then he would go back to his rooms, which the chief jailer locked and bolted in the presence of his superior officer.

On the evening of the escape, Bazaine pretended he was indisposed, and expressed a wish to retire an hour earlier than usual. He returned therefore to his apartment, but as soon as the governor had gone off to call the jailer and tell him to lock up the captive, the marshal came out again quickly and hid himself in the yard.

The empty prison was locked up, and the jailers went home.

At about eleven o'clock Bazaine, armed with the ladder, left his hiding place, fastened the ropes and made his descent on to the rocks.

At dawn of day an accomplice unfastened the ladder and threw it over the walls.

Toward eight o'clock in the morning the governor, surprised at not seeing anything of his prisoner, who was wont to be an early riser, sent to inquire about him. The marshal's valet refused, however, to disturb his master.

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At length, at nine o'clock, the governor forced open the door and found the cage empty.

On her side Madame Bazaine, in order to carry out her scheme, had applied to a man who was indebted to her husband for a most important service. She appealed to a grateful heart, and gained an ally both energetic and devoted. Together they settled all the details; she then went under an assumed name to Genoa, and, under pretext of an excursion to Naples, hired for a thousand francs a day a little Italian steamer, stipulating that the trip should last at least a week, and that it might be extended to another week on the same terms.

The vessel started, but no sooner were they at sea than the traveller appeared to change her mind and asked the captain if he would object to going as far as Cannes to fetch her sister-in-law. The sailor willingly consented, and he dropped anchor on Sunday evening in the Gulf Juan.

Madame Bazaine was set on shore and ordered the boat to keep within hail. Her devoted accomplice was awaiting her in another boat near the promenade of the Croisette, and they crossed the channel which separates the mainland from the little island of Sainte-Marguerite. There her husband was waiting on the rocks, his clothes torn, face bruised and hands bleeding. The sea being rather rough, he was obliged to wade through the water to reach the boat, which otherwise would have been dashed to pieces against the coast.

When they returned to the mainland, they cast the boat adrift.

They rejoined the first boat, and then at last the vessel, which had remained with steam up. Madame

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Bazaine informed the captain that her sister-in-law was not well enough to join her, and pointing to the marshal, she added:

"Not having a servant, I have hired a valet. The fool has just tumbled down on the rocks and got himself in the mess you see. Send him, if you please, down to the sailors, and give him what is necessary to dress his wounds and mend his clothes."

Bazaine went down and spent the night in the forecastle.

The next morning at break of day they were out at sea; then Madame Bazaine again changed her mind, and pleading indisposition, had herself taken back to Genoa.

However, the news of the escape had already spread, and the populace hearing of it, a clamoring mob assembled under the hotel windows. The uproar soon became so violent that the terrified landlord insisted on the travellers escaping by a private door.

I relate this story as it was told to me, but I do not vouch for its correctness.

We drew near the squadron, the heavy ironclads standing out in single file, like battle towers built in the sea. They were the *Colbert*, the *Dévastation*, the *Amiral-Duperré*, the *Courbet*, the *Indomptable*, and the *Richelieu*; two dispatch boats, the *Hiron-delle* and the *Milan*; and four torpedo boats going through evolutions in the gulf.

I wanted to visit the *Courbet*, as it passes for the most perfect type in the French navy.

Nothing can give a better idea of human labor, of the intricate and formidable labor done by the ingeniously clever hands of the puny human animal,

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than the enormous iron citadels which float and sail about, bearing an army of soldiers, an arsenal of monstrous arms, the enormous masses of which are composed of tiny pieces fitted, soldered, forged, bolted together, a toil of ants and giants, which shows at the same time all the genius, all the weakness and all the irretrievable barbarousness of the race, so active and so feeble, directing all its efforts toward creating instruments for its own self-destruction.

Those who in former days raised up cathedrals in stone, carved as finely as any lacework, fairy-like palaces to shelter childish and pious fancies, were they worth less than those who nowadays launch forth on the sea these iron houses, real temples of Death?

At the moment that I leave the ship to get on board my cockleshell, I hear the sound of firing on shore. It is the regiment at Antibes practicing rifle shooting on the sands and among the pine woods. The smoke rises in white flakes, like evaporating clouds of cotton, and I can see the red trousers of the soldiers as they run along the beach.

The naval officers suddenly become interested, point their glasses landward, and their hearts beat faster at this spectacle of mimic warfare.

At the mere mention of the word war, I am seized with a sense of bewilderment, as though I heard of witchcraft, of the inquisition, of some far distant thing, ended long ago, abominable and monstrous, against all natural law.

When we talk of cannibals, we proudly smile and proclaim our superiority over these savages. Which are the savages, the true savages? Those who fight

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to eat the vanquished or those who fight to kill, only to kill?

The gallant little soldiers running about over there are as surely doomed to death as the flocks of sheep driven along the road by the butcher. They will fall on some plain, with their heads split open by sabre cuts or their chests riddled by bullets, and yet they are young men who might work, produce something, be useful. Their fathers are old and poverty-stricken, their mothers, who during twenty years have loved them, adored them as only mothers can adore, may perchance hear in six months or a year that the son, the child, the big fellow, reared with so much care, at such an expense and with so much love, has been cast in a hole like a dead dog, after having been ripped open by a bullet and trampled, crushed, mangled by the rush of cavalry charges. Why have they killed her boy, her beautiful boy, her sole hope, her pride, her life? She cannot understand. Yes, indeed, why?

War! fighting! slaughtering! butchering men! And to think that now, in our own century, with all our civilization, with the expansion of science and the height of philosophy to which the human race is supposed to have attained, we should have schools in which we teach the art of killing, of killing from a distance, to perfection, numbers of people at the same time; poor devils, innocent men, fathers of families, men of untarnished reputation. The most astounding thing is that the people do not rise up against the governing power. What difference is there then between monarchies and republics? And what is more astounding still, why does society not rise up bodily in rebellion at the word "war"?

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Ah! We shall ever continue to live borne down by the old and odious customs, the criminal prejudices, the ferocious ideas of our barbarous forefathers, for we are but animals, and we shall remain animals, led only by instinct, and that nothing will ever change.

Should we not have spurned any other than Victor Hugo, who should have launched forth the grand cry of deliverance and truth?

"To-day might is called violence, and is beginning to be condemned; war is arraigned. Civilization, at the demand of all humanity, directs an inquiry and indicts the great criminal brief against conquerors and generals. The nations are beginning to understand that the aggrandizement of a crime can in no way lessen it; that if murder is a crime, to murder a great many does not create any attenuating circumstance; that if robbery is a disgrace, invasion cannot be a glory.

"Ah! Let us proclaim the peremptory truth, let us dishonor war."

Idle anger, poetic indignation! War is more venerated than ever.

A clever artist in such matters, a slaughtering genius, Monsieur de Moltke replied one day to some peace delegates in the following extraordinary words:

"War is holy and of divine institution; it is one of the sacred laws of nature; it keeps alive in men all the great and noble sentiments, honor, disinterestedness, virtue, courage; in one word, it prevents them from falling into the most hideous materialism."

Therefore to collect a herd of some four hundred

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thousand men, march day and night without respite, to think of nothing, study nothing, learn nothing, read nothing, be of no earthly use to any one, rot with dirt, lie down in mire, live like brutes in a continual besotment, pillage towns, burn villages, ruin nations; then meeting another similar agglomeration of human flesh, rush upon it, shed lakes of blood, cover plains with pounded flesh mingled with muddy and bloody earth; pile up heaps of slain; have arms and legs blown off, brains scattered without benefit to any one, and perish at the corner of some field while your old parents, your wife and children are dying of hunger; this is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism!

Warriors are the scourges of the earth. We struggle against nature and ignorance, against obstacles of all kinds, in order to lessen the hardships of our miserable existence. Men, benefactors, scholars wear out their lives toiling, seeking what may help, what may solace their brethren. Eager in their useful work, they pile up discovery on discovery, enlarging the human mind, extending science, adding something each day to the stock of human knowledge, to the welfare, the comfort, the strength of their country.

War is declared. In six months the generals have destroyed the efforts of twenty years' patience and genius. And this is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism.

We have seen war. We have seen men maddened and gone back to their brute estate, killing for mere pleasure, killing out of terror, out of bravado, from sheer ostentation. Then, when right no longer exists, when law is dead, when all notion of justice has

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disappeared, we have seen ruthlessly shot down innocent beings who, picked up along the road, had become objects of suspicion simply because they were afraid. We have seen dogs as they lay chained up at their master's gate killed in order to try a new revolver; we have seen cows riddled with bullets as they lay in the fields, without reason, only to fire off guns, just for fun.

And this is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism. To invade a country, to kill the man who defends his home on the plea that he wears a smock and has no forage cap on his head, to burn down the houses of the poor creatures who are without bread, to break, to steal furniture, drink the wine found in the cellars, violate the women found in the streets, consume thousands of francs' worth of powder and leave behind misery and cholera.

This is what is called not falling into the most hideous materialism.

What have they ever done to show their intelligence, these valiant warriors? Nothing. What have they invented? Guns and cannons. That is all.

The inventor of the wheelbarrow, has he not done more for humanity by the simple and practical idea of fitting a wheel between two poles than the inventor of modern fortifications?

What remains of Greece? Books and marbles. Is she great by what she conquered or by what she produced? Was it the invasion of the Persians that prevented her from falling into the most hideous materialism? Was it the invasion of the barbarians that saved Rome and regenerated her?

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Did Napoleon the First continue the great intellectual movement begun by the philosophers at the end of the last century?

Well, yes, since governments assume the right of death over the people, there is nothing astonishing in the people sometimes assuming the right of death over governments.

They defend themselves. They are right. No one has an absolute right to govern others. It can only be done for the good of those who are governed. Whosoever governs must consider it as much his duty to avoid war as it is that of the captain of a vessel to avoid shipwreck.

When a captain has lost his ship, he is judged and condemned if found guilty of negligence or even of incapacity.

Why should not governments be brought before a tribunal after every declaration of war? If the people understood this, if they took the law into their own hands against the murdering powers, if they refused to allow themselves to be killed without a reason, if they used their weapons against those who distributed them to slaughter with, that day war would indeed be a dead letter. But that day will never dawn!

CHAPTER III

AGAY, *April 8th.*

"Fine weather, sir."

I get up and go on deck. It is three o'clock in the morning. The sea is calm, the infinite heavens look like an immense dark vault sown with grains of fire. A very light breeze comes from off the land.

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The coffee is hot. We swallow it down, and, without losing a moment, in order to take advantage of the favorable wind, we set sail.

Once more we glide over the waters toward the open sea. The coast disappears, all around us looks black. It is indeed a sensation, a disturbing and delicious emotion to plunge onward into the empty night, into the deep silence on the sea, far from everything. It seems as though one were quitting the world, as though one would never reach any land, as though there were no more shores and even no more days. At my feet a little lantern throws a light upon the compass that guides me on my way. We must run at least three miles in the open when the sun has risen, to round Cape Roux and the Drammont in safety, whatever may be the wind. To avoid any accidents, I have had the warning lights lit, red on the port and green on the starboard side. And I am enraptured with this silent, uninterrupted, quiet flight.

Suddenly a cry is heard in front of us. I am startled, for the voice is near; and I can perceive nothing, nothing but the obscure wall of darkness into which I am plunging and which closes again behind me. Raymond, who is on watch in the bows, says to me: "'Tis a tartan going east. Put the helm up, sir; we shall pass astern." And of a sudden, nigh at hand, uprises a vague but startling phantom, the large drifting shadow of a big sail, seen but for a few seconds and quickly vanishing. Nothing is more strange, more fantastic and more thrilling than these rapid apparitions at sea during the night. The fishing and sand boats carry no lights; they are, therefore, only seen as they pass us by, leaving us

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with the impression as of some supernatural encounter.

I hear in the distance the whistling of a bird. It approaches, passes by and goes off. Oh, that I could rove like that!

At last dawn breaks, slowly, gently, without a cloud, and the day begins, a real summer's day.

Raymond asserts that we shall have an east wind, Bernard still believes in a westerly one and advises my changing our course and sailing on the starboard tack straight toward the Drammont, which stands out in the distance. I at once agree with him, and under the gentle breath of a dying breeze we draw nearer to the Esterel. The long red shore drops into the blue water, giving it a violet tinge. It is strange, pretty, bristling with numberless points and gulfs, capricious and coquettish rocks, the thousand fancies of a much-admired mountain. On its slopes the pine forests reach up to the granite summits, which resemble castles, towns and armies of stones running after each other. And at its foot the sea is so clear that the sandy shoals or the weedy bottoms can be distinguished.

Ay, verily, I do feel on certain days such a horror of all that is that I long for death. The invariable monotony of landscapes, faces and thoughts becomes an intensely acute suffering. The commonplaceness of the universe astonishes and revolts me, the littleness of all things fills me with disgust, and I am overwhelmed at the meagreness of human life.

At other times, on the contrary, I enjoy everything as an animal does. If my restless, agitated mind, hypertrophied by work, bounds onward to hopes that are not those of our race, and then, after having

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realized that all is vanity, falls back into a contempt for all that is, my animal body, at least, is enraptured with all the intoxication of life. Like the birds, I love the sky; like the prowling wolf, the forests; I delight in rocky heights, like a chamois; the thick grass I love to roll in and gallop over like a horse, and, like a fish, I revel in the clear waters. I feel thrilling within me the sensations of all the different species of animals, of all their instincts, of all the confused longings of inferior creatures. I love the earth as they do, not as other men do; I love it without admiring it, without poetry, without exaltation; I love with a deep and animal attachment, contemptible yet holy, all that lives, all that grows, all we see; for all this, leaving my spirit calm, excites only my eyes and my heart; the days, the nights, the rivers, the seas, the storms, the woods, the hues of dawn, the glance of woman, her very touch.

The gentle ripple of water on the sandy shore or in the rocky granite affects and moves me, and the joy that fills me as I feel myself driven forward by the wind and carried along by the waves, proceeds from the abandonment of myself to the mere brute and natural forces of creation, from the fact of my return to a primitive state.

When the weather is beautiful, as it is to-day, I feel in my veins the blood of the lascivious and vagabond fauns of olden times. I am no longer the brother of mankind, but the brother of all creatures and of all nature!

The sun mounts above the horizon. The breeze dies away as it did the day before yesterday, but the west wind foretold by Bernard does not rise any more than the easterly one announced by Raymond.

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Till ten o'clock we float motionless like a wreck, then a little breath from the open sea starts us on our road, falls, rises again, seems to mock us, glancing across the sail, promising at each moment a breeze that does not come. It is nothing, a mere whiff, a flutter of a fan; nevertheless it is sufficient to prevent our being stationary. The porpoises, those clowns of the sea, play about around us, dashing out of the water with rapid bounds, as though they would take flight, striking into the air like lightning, then plunging and rising again farther off.

At about one o'clock, as we lay broadside on to Agay, the breeze died away, and I saw that I should sleep out at sea if I did not man the boat to tow the yacht into the bay.

I therefore made the two men get into the dingey, and when at a distance of some thirty yards or so they began to tug me along. A fierce sun was glaring on the water, and its burning rays beat down upon the deck.

The two sailors rowed in slow and regular fashion like worn-out cranks, which, though working with difficulty, ceaselessly continue their mechanical labor.

The Bay of Agay forms a very pretty dock, well sheltered and closed on one side by upright red rocks, overlooked by the semaphore on the summit of the mountain, and prolonged toward the open sea by the Ile d'Or, so called on account of its color; while on the other side is a line of sunken rocks and a small headland level with the surface of the water, bearing a lighthouse to mark the entry.

At the farther end is an inn, ready for the entertainment of skippers of vessels that have taken refuge there from stress of weather, or for fishermen

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during the summer; and a railway station where trains only stop twice a day, and where no one ever gets out; and a pretty river that winds away into the Esterel, as far as the valley named Malin-fermet, which is as full of pink oleanders as any African ravine.

No road leads from the interior to this delicious bay. Only a pathway takes you to Saint-Raphaël, passing through the porphyry quarries of Dramont; but no vehicle could traverse it. We are, therefore, quite lost in the mountain.

I resolved to wander about till nightfall in the paths bordered by cytissus and gum mastic. The strong, perfumed odor of native plants filled the air, mingling with the powerful resinous breath of the forest, which seemed to be panting in the heat.

After an hour's walk, I was deep among the pine trees, scattered sparsely on a gentle declivity of the mountain. The purple granite rocks—the bones of the earth—seemed reddened by the sun, and I wended my way slowly, happy as the lizards must be on burning hot stones, when I perceived on the summit of the mountain, coming toward me, without seeing me, two lovers lost in the depths of their love dream.

'Twas a charmingly pretty sight. On they came, with arms entwined, moving with heedless footsteps through the alternating sun and shade that flecked the sloping banks.

She appeared to me very graceful and very simple, with a gray travelling dress and a dashing coquettish felt hat. I hardly saw him; I only noticed that he seemed well bred. I had seated myself behind the trunk of a pine tree, to watch them pass by.

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They did not perceive me, and continued their descent with interlocked arms, silently and without a word, so absorbed were they in their love.

When I lost sight of them I felt as though a sadness had fallen on my heart. A felicity that I did not know had passed near me, and I surmised that it was the greatest felicity of all. I returned toward the Bay of Agay, too dejected now to continue my stroll.

Until the evening I lay stretched out on the grass by the side of the river, and at about seven o'clock I went into the inn for dinner.

My men had notified the innkeeper, and he was expecting me. My table was set in the whitewashed room beside another table, at which sat my lovers opposite each other, fondly gazing into each other's eyes.

I felt ashamed at disturbing them, as though I were committing a mean and unbecoming action.

They stared at me for a few seconds, and then resumed their low-toned conversation.

The innkeeper, who had known me for a long time, took a seat near mine. He talked of wild boars and rabbits, the fine weather, the *mistral*, about an Italian captain who had slept at the inn a few nights before, and then to flatter my vanity, he praised my yacht, the black hull of which I could see through the window, with its tall mast, and my red and white pennant floating aloft.

My neighbors, who had eaten very rapidly, soon left. As for me, I dawdled about, looking at the young moon shedding its soft rays over the little roadstead. At last I saw my dingey nearing the shore, scattering lines of silver as it advanced

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through the pale, motionless light that fell upon the water.

As I went down to my boat, I saw the lovers standing on the beach gazing at the sea.

And as I rowed away rapidly I still distinguished their outline on the shore, their shadows erect side by side. They seemed to fill the bay, the night, the heavens with a symbolic grandeur, so widespread was the atmosphere of love they diffused around them.

And when I reached my yacht, I remained seated a long while on deck, overcome with sadness without knowing wherefore, filled with regrets without knowing why, unwilling even to decide on going down to my cabin, as though I would fain absorb a little more of the tenderness they had diffused around them. Suddenly one of the windows of the inn was lit up, and I saw their profiles on the bright background. Then my loneliness overpowered me, and in the balminess of the springlike night, at the soft sound of the waves on the sand, under the crescent moon shedding its rays over the sea, I felt in my heart such an intense desire to love that I was near crying out in my envious distress.

Then, all at once, I became ashamed of this weakness, and, unwilling to admit to myself that I was a man like another, I accused the moonshine of disturbing my reason.

I have, moreover, always believed that the moon exercises a mysterious influence on the human brain.

It fills poets with vagaries, rendering them delighful or ridiculous, and produces on lovers' affections the effect of Ruhmkorff's pile on electric cur-

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rents. The man who loves in a normal manner in the sunlight adores with frenzy beneath the moon.

A youthful and charming woman maintained to me one day, I forget on what occasion, that moon-strokes are infinitely more dangerous than sun-strokes. They are caught, she said, unawares, out walking perchance on a beautiful night, and they are incurable; you remain mad; not raving mad, not mad enough to be shut up, but mad of a special madness, gentle, incurable; and you no longer think on any subject like other men.

I have certainly been moonstruck to-night, for I feel strangely unreasonable and lightheaded; and the little crescent moon in its downward course toward the sea affects me, melts me to tears, and rends my heart.

Wherein lies the power of seduction of this moon, aged dead planet that it is, rambling through the heavens with its yellow face and sad, ghostly light, that it should thus agitate us, beings whom even our vagabond thoughts disturb?

Do we love it because it is dead? as the poet Haraucourt says:

*"Puis ce fut l'âge blond des tiédurs et des vents.
La lune se peupla de murmures vivants:
Elle eut des mers sans fond et des fleuves sans nombre,
Des troupeaux, des cités, des pleurs, des cris joyeux;
Elle eut l'amour; elle eut ses arts, ses lois, ses dieux,
Et lentement rentra dans l'ombre."*

Do we love it because the poets, to whom we owe the eternal illusion that surrounds us in this world, have dimmed our sight by all the images they have seen in its pallid rays, have taught our over-excited sensibility to feel in a thousand different ways the soft and monotonous effects it sheds over the world?

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When it rises behind the trees, when it pours forth its shimmering light on the flowing river, when it descends through the boughs on to the sand of the shaded alleys, when it mounts solitary in the black and empty sky, when it dips toward the sea, stretching out on the undulating surface of the waters a vast pathway of light, are we not haunted by all the charming verses with which it has inspired great dreamers?

If we wander forth by night in a joyous mood and see its full circle, round like a yellow eye, watching us, perched just over a roof, Musset's immortal ballad is recalled to our mind.

And is it not he, the mocking poet, who immediately presents it to us through his eyes?

"C'était dans la nuit, brune,
Sur le clocher jauni
La lune
Comme un point sur un I.

"Lune, quel esprit sombre
Promène au bout d'un fil,
Dans l'ombre,
Ta face ou ton profil?"

If we walk on some evening when we feel sad, on the beach by the ocean illuminated by its rays, do we not, in spite of ourselves, at once recite the two grand and melancholy lines:

"Seule au-dessus des mers, la lune voyageant
Laisse dans les flots noirs tomber ses pleurs d'argent."

If we awake, to find our bed lighted up by a long beam coming in at the window, do we not feel at once as though the white figure evoked by Catulle Mendès were descending upon us:

"Elle venait, avec un lis dans chaque main,
La pente d'un rayon lui servant de chemin."

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If, in some evening walk in the country, we suddenly hear the long, sinister howl of a farm dog, are we not forcibly struck by the recollection of the admirable poem of Leconte de Lisle, "Les Hurleurs":

"Seule, la lune pâle, en écartant la nue,
Comme une morne lampe, oscillait tristement,
Monde muet, marqué d'un signe de colère,
Débris d'un globe mort au hasard dispersé,
Elle laissait tomber de son orbe glacé
Un reflet sépulcral sur l'océan polaire."

At the evening trysting place, one saunters slowly through the leafy path, with arm encircling the beloved one, pressing her hand, and kissing her brow. She is perhaps a little tired, a little agitated, and walks with lagging step.

A bench appears in sight, under the leaves bathed by the soft light, as by a calm shower.

In our hearts and minds, like an exquisite love-song, the two charming lines start up:

"Et réveiller, pour s'asseoir à sa place,
Le clair de lune endormi sur le banc!"

Can one see the lessening crescent, as on this evening, cast its fair profile on the vast sky spangled with stars, without thinking of the end of that masterpiece of Victor Hugo's which is called "Boaz Endormi":

..... And Ruth, motionless,
Asked herself, as she opened her half-closed eye beneath her veil,
What God, what reaper of the eternal summer,
Had negligently thrown as he passed by
This golden sickle in the starry field.

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And who has better described the moon, courteous and tender to all lovers, than Hugo:

Night fell, all was hushed; the torches died out
Under the darkening woods, the springs lamented.
The nightingale, hidden in its shady nest,
Sang like a poet and like a lover.
In the depths of the dark foliage all dispersed,
The madcaps laughing carried off the wise,
The fair one disappeared in the gloom with her lover,
And with the vague trouble of some dream
They felt by degrees intermingled with their souls,
With their secret thoughts, with their glances of flame,
With their hearts, their senses, with their yielding reason,
The blue moonlight that bathed the vast horizon.

And I remember also the admirable prayer to the moon which is the opening scene of the eleventh book of Apuleius' "Golden Ass."

Still, all the songs of mankind are not enough to fill our hearts with the sentimental sadness with which this poor planet inspires us.

We pity the moon, in spite of ourselves, without knowing the reason, and this is why we love it.

Our very affection for it is mingled with compassion; we feel pity for it as for an old maid, for we vaguely feel, the poets notwithstanding, that it is not a corpse, but a cold virgin.

Planets, like women, need a husband, and the poor moon, disdained by the sun, is nothing more nor less than an old maid, as we mortals say.

And it is for this reason that, with its timid light, it fills us with hopes that cannot be realized, and desires that cannot be fulfilled.

All that we vainly and dimly wait and hope for upon this earth works in our hearts like mysterious but powerless sap, beneath the pale rays of the moon. When we raise our eyes to it, we quiver with inexpressible tenderness and are thrilled by impossible dreams!

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The narrow crescent, a mere thread of gold, now dipped its keen, gleaming point in the water, and gradually plunged gently and slowly till the other point, so delicate that I could not detect the moment of its vanishing, had also disappeared.

Then I raised my eyes toward the inn. The lighted window was closed. A dull melancholy crushed my heart, and I went below.

No sooner had I lain down than I felt sleep was impossible, and I remained lying on my back with my eyes closed, my thoughts on the alert, and all my nerves quivering. Not a motion, not a sound, near or far, nothing but the breathing of the two sailors through the thin bulkhead, could be heard.

Suddenly something grated. What was it? I know not. Some block in the rigging, no doubt; but the tone—tender, plaintive and mournful—of the sound sent a thrill through me; then nothing more. An infinite silence seemed to spread from the earth to the stars; nothing more—not a breath, not a shiver on the waters, not a vibration of the yacht, nothing; and then again the slight and unrecognizable moan recommenced. It seemed to me as I listened as though a jagged blade were sawing at my heart. Just as certain noises, certain notes, certain voices harrow us, and in one second pour into our soul all it can contain of sorrow, despair, and anguish. I listened expectantly, and heard it again, the identical sound, which now seemed to emanate from my own self—to be wrung from my nerves—or, rather, to resound within me in a secret, deep and desolate cry. Yes, it was a cruel though familiar voice, an expected voice that filled me with despair. It passed over me with its weird and

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feeble tones as an uncanny thing sowing broadcast the appalling terrors of delirium, for it had power to awake the horrible anguish which lies slumbering in the inmost heart of every living man. What was it? It was the voice ringing with reproaches which tortures our soul, clamoring ceaselessly, obscure, painful, harassing; a voice, unappeasable and mysterious, which will not be ignored; ferocious in its reproaches for what we have done, as well as for what we have left undone; the voice of vague remorse, of useless regrets, of days gone by, of women unloved; of joys that were vain, and hopes that are dead; the voice of the past, of all that has disappointed us, has fled and disappeared forever, of what we have not attained, and never shall attain; the small still voice which ever proclaims the failure of our life, the uselessness of our efforts, the impotence of our minds, and the weakness of our flesh.

It spoke to me in that short whisper, recommencing after each dismal silence of the dark night; it spoke of all I would have loved, of all that I had vaguely desired, expected, dreamed of; all that I would have longed to see, to understand, to know, to taste, all that my insatiable, poor and weak spirit had gilded with a useless hope, all that toward which it had been tempted to soar, without being able to tear asunder the chains of ignorance that held it.

Ah! I have coveted all, and delighted in nothing. I should have required the vitality of a whole race, the varying intelligence, all the faculties, all the powers scattered among all beings, and thousands of existences in reserve; for I bear within myself every desire and every curiosity, and I am compelled to see all, and grasp nothing.

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Whence, therefore, arises this suffering in the fact of living, since to the generality of men it only brings satisfaction? Wherefore this unknown torture which preys upon me? Why should I not know the reality of pleasure, expectation and possession?

It is because I carry within me that second sight which is at the same time the power and the despair of writers. I write because I understand and suffer with all that exists, because I know too well, and above all, because without being able to enjoy anything, I contemplate it inwardly in the mirror of my mind.

Let no one envy, but rather pity us, for it is in this that the literary man differs from his fellow creatures.

For him no simple feeling any longer exists. All he sees, his joys, his pleasures, his suffering, his despair, all instantaneously become subjects of observation. In spite of all, in spite of himself, he analyzes everything, hearts, faces, gestures, intonations. As soon as he has seen, whatever it may be, he must know the wherefore. He has not a spark of enthusiasm, not a cry, not a kiss that is spontaneous, not one instantaneous action done merely because it must be done, unconsciously, without reflection, without understanding, without noting it down afterward.

If he suffers, he notes down his suffering, and classes it in his memory; he says to himself as he leaves the cemetery where he has left the being he has loved most in the world: "It is curious what I felt; it was like an intoxication of pain, etc. . . ." And then he recalls all the details, the attitude of those about him, the discordant gestures of feigned

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grief, the insincere faces, and a thousand little insignificant trifles, artistic details—the sign of the cross made by an old woman leading a child, a ray of light through a window, a dog that crossed the funeral procession, the effect of the hearse under the tall yew trees in the cemetery, the face of the undertaker and its muscular contractions, the strain of the four men who lowered the coffin into the grave, a thousand things in fact that a poor fellow suffering with all his heart, soul and strength would never have noticed.

He has seen all, noticed all, remembered all, in spite of himself, because he is, above all else, a literary man, and his intellect is constructed in such a manner that the reverberation in him is much more vivid, more natural, so to speak, than the first shock, the echo more sonorous than the original sound.

He seems to have two souls, one that notes, explains, comments on each sensation of its neighbor, the natural soul common to all men; and he lives condemned to be the mere reflection of himself or of others; condemned to look on, and see himself feel, act, love, think, suffer, and never be free like the rest of mankind, simply, genially, frankly, without analyzing his own soul after every joy and every sob.

If he converses, his words often wear the air of slander, and that only because he is clairvoyant, and cannot avoid analyzing the secret springs which regulate the feelings and actions of others.

If he writes, he cannot refrain from putting into his books all that he has seen, all he has gathered, all he knows; he makes no exception in favor of friends

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or relations, but he pitilessly lays bare the hearts of those he loves or has loved, with a cruel impartiality—exaggerating even to make the effect more powerful—wholly absorbed by his work, and in no wise by his affections.

And if he loves, if he loves a woman, he will dissect her, as he would a corpse in a hospital. All she says, all she does, is instantly weighed in the delicate analytical scales which he carries within him, and is docketed according to its documentary importance. If, in an unpremeditated impulse, she throws herself on his neck, he will judge the action, according to its opportuneness, its fitness, its dramatic power, and will tacitly condemn it, if he feels it artificial or badly done.

Actor and spectator of himself and of others, he is never solely an actor, like the good folk who take life easily. Everything around him becomes transparent, hearts, deeds, secret intentions; and he suffers from a strange malady, a kind of duality of the mind, that makes of him a terribly vibrating and complicated piece of machinery, fatiguing even to himself.

Owing to his peculiarly morbid sensibility, he is no happier than one flayed alive, to whom nearly every sensation becomes a torture.

I can remember dark days, in which my heart was so lacerated by things I had only caught sight of for a second that the memory of those visions has remained within me like grievous wounds.

One morning, in the Avenue de l'Opéra, in the midst of a stirring and joyous crowd, intoxicated with the sunlight of the month of May, I suddenly caught sight of a creature, for whom one could find

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no name, an old woman bent double, dressed in tatters that had been garments, with an old straw bonnet stripped of its former ornaments, the ribbons and flowers having disappeared in times immemorial. And she went by, dragging her feet along so painfully that I felt in my heart, as much as she did, more than she could, the aching pain of each of her steps. Two sticks supported her. She passed along without seeing any one, indifferent to all—to the noise, the crowd, the carriages and the sun! Where was she going? She carried something in a paper parcel hanging by a string. What was it? Bread? Yes, without a doubt. Nobody, no neighbor had been able or willing to do this errand for her, and she had undertaken herself the terrible journey from her garret to the baker. At least two hours must she spend, going and coming. And what a mournful struggle! Surely as fearful a road as that of Christ on His way to Calvary!

I raised my eyes toward the roofs of the tall houses. She was going up there! When would she get there? How many panting pauses on the steps, in the little stairway so black and winding?

Every one turned round to look at her! They murmured "Poor woman!" and passed on. Her skirt, her rag of a skirt, hardly holding to her dilapidated body, draggled on the pavement. And there was a mind there! A mind? No, but fearful, incessant, harassing suffering! Oh, the misery of the aged without bread, the aged without hope, without children, without money, with nothing before them but death; do we ever think of it? Do we ever think of the aged famished creatures in the garrets? Do

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we think of the tears shed by those dimmed eyes, once bright, joyous, full of happy emotion?

Another time, it was raining, I was alone, shooting in the plains of Normandy, plodding through the deep-ploughed fields of greasy mud that melted and slipped under my feet. From time to time, a partridge surprised, hiding behind a clod of earth, flew off heavily through the downpour. The report of my gun, smothered by the sheet of water that fell from the skies, hardly sounded louder than the crack of a whip, and the gray bird fell, its feathers bespattered with blood.

I felt sad enough to weep, to weep like the showers that were pouring down on the world, and on me; my heart was filled with sadness and I was overcome with fatigue, so that I could hardly raise my feet, heavily coated as they were with the clay soil. I was returning home when I saw in the middle of the fields the doctor's gig following a cross-road.

The low black carriage was passing along, covered by its round hood and drawn by a brown horse, like an omen of death wandering through the country on this sinister day. Suddenly it pulled up, the doctor's head made its appearance, and he called out:

"Hullo there!"

I went toward him, and he said:

"Will you help me to nurse a case of diphtheria? I am all alone, and I want some one to hold the woman, while I take out the false membrane from her throat."

"I'll come with you," I replied, and I got into his carriage.

He told me the following story:

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Diphtheria, terrible diphtheria that suffocates unhappy creatures, had made its appearance at poor Martinet's farm.

Both father and son had died at the beginning of the week. The mother and daughter were now in their turn dying.

A neighbor who was nursing them, feeling suddenly unwell, had taken flight the day before, leaving the door wide open, and abandoning the two sick people on their straw pallets, alone, without anything to drink, choking, suffocating, dying; alone, for the last twenty-four hours!

The doctor had cleaned out the mother's throat and made her swallow; but the child, maddened by pain and the anguish of suffocation, had buried and hidden its head in the straw bedding, absolutely refusing to allow itself to be touched.

The doctor, accustomed to such scenes, repeated in a sad and resigned voice:

"I cannot really spend all day with these patients. By Jove! these people do give one a heart-ache. When you think that they have remained twenty-four hours without drinking. The wind blew the rain in on their very beds. All the hens had taken shelter in the fireplace."

We reached the farm. The doctor fastened his horse to the bough of an apple tree before the door, and we went in. A strong smell of sickness and damp, of fever and moldiness, of hospital and cellar greeted our nostrils as we entered. In this gray and dismal house, fireless and without sign of life, it was bitterly cold; the swampy chill of a marsh. The clock had stopped; the rain fell down into the great fireplace, where the hens had scattered the

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ashes, and we heard in a dark corner the noise of a pair of bellows, husky and rapid. It was the breathing of the child. The mother, stretched out in a kind of large wooden box, the peasant's bed, and covered with old rags and old clothes, seemed to rest quietly. She slightly turned her head toward us.

The doctor inquired:

"Have you got a candle?"

She answered in a low, distressing tone:

"In the cupboard."

He took the light, and led me to the farther end of the room toward the little girl's crib.

She lay gasping, with emaciated cheeks, glistening eyes, and tangled hair, a pitiable sight. At each breath deep hollows could be seen in her thin, strained neck. Stretched out on her back, she convulsively clutched with both hands the rags that covered her, and directly she caught sight of us, she turned her face away, and hid herself in the straw.

I took hold of her shoulders, and the doctor, forcing her to open her mouth, pulled out of her throat a long white strip of skin, which seemed to me as dry as a bit of leather.

Her breathing immediately became easier, and she drank a little. The mother, raising herself on her elbow, watched us. She stammered out:

"Is it done?"

"Yes, it's done."

"Are we going to be left all alone?"

A terror, a terrible terror shook her voice, the terror of solitude, of loneliness, of darkness, and of death that she felt so near to her.

I answered:

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"No, my good woman, I will stay till the doctor sends you a nurse."

And, turning toward the doctor, I added:

"Send old Mother Mauduit; I will pay her."

"Very well, I'll send her at once."

He shook my hand and went out; and I heard his gig drive off, over the damp road.

I was left alone with the two dying creatures.

My dog Paf had lain down in front of the empty hearth, and this reminded me that a little fire would be good for us all. I therefore went out to seek for wood and straw, and soon a bright flame lit up the whole room, and the bed of the sick child, who was again gasping for breath.

I sat down and stretched out my legs in front of the fire.

The rain was beating against the window panes, the wind rattled over the roof. I heard the short, hard wheezing breath of the two women, and the breathing of my dog, who sighed with pleasure, curled up before the bright fireplace.

Life! life! what is it? These two unhappy creatures, who had always slept on straw, eaten black bread, suffered every kind of misery, were about to die! What had they done? The father was dead, the son was dead. The poor souls had always passed for honest folk, had been liked and esteemed as simple and worthy fellows!

I watched my steaming boots and my sleeping dog, and there arose within me, a shameful and sensuous contentment, as I compared my lot with that of these slaves.

The little girl seemed to choke, and suddenly the grating sound became an intolerable suffering to

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me, lacerating me like a dagger, which at each stroke pierced my heart.

I went toward her :

"Will you drink?" I said.

She moved her head to say yes, and I poured a few drops of water down her throat, but she could not swallow them.

The mother, who was quieter, had turned round to look at her child; and all at once a feeling of dread took possession of me, a sinister dread that passed over me, like the touch of some invisible monster. Where was I? I no longer knew! Was I dreaming? What horrible nightmare was this?

Is it true that such things happen? that one dies like this? And I glanced into all the dark corners of the cottage, as though I expected to see crouching in some obscure angle a hideous, unmentionable, terrifying thing, the thing which lies in wait for the lives of men, and kills, devours, crushes, strangles them; the thing that delights in red blood, eyes glistening with fever, wrinkles and scars, white hair and decay.

The fire was dying out. I threw some more wood on it, and warmed my back, shuddering in every limb. At least, I hoped to die in a good room, with doctors around my bed and medicines on the tables! And these women had been all alone for twenty-four hours in this wretched hovel, without a fire, stretched on the straw with the death rattle in their throats! At last I heard the trot of a horse and the sounds of wheels; and the nurse came in coolly, pleased at finding some work to do, and showing little surprise at the sight of such misery.

I left her some money and fled with my dog; I

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fled like a malefactor, running away in the rain; with the rattle of those two throats still ringing in my ears—running toward my warm home where my servants were awaiting me and preparing my good dinner.

But I shall never forget that scene, nor many other dreadful things, that make me loathe this world.

What would I not give at times to be allowed not to think, not to feel, to live like an animal in a warm, clear atmosphere, in a country mellow with golden light, devoid of the raw, crude tones of verdure, a country of the East where I might sleep without weariness, and wake without care, where restlessness is not anxiety, where love is free from torture, and existence is not a burden.

I should choose there a large square dwelling, like a huge box sparkling in the sun.

From the terrace I should look upon the sea and the white winglike pointed sails of the Greek and Turkish boats, as they flit to and fro. The outer walls have hardly any apertures. A large garden, with air heavily laden under the overshadowing palm trees, forms the centre of this Oriental home. Sprays of clear water shoot up under the trees, and fall back again with a slight splash, into a broad marble fountain sanded with golden dust. Here I should bathe constantly, between two pipes, two dreams, or two kisses.

I should have slaves, black and handsome, draped in light, airy clothing, noiselessly running hither and thither over the heavy carpets.

My walls should be soft and yielding, like the flesh of a woman, and on the divans encircling each

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room numberless cushions of every shape would permit of my reposing in every conceivable attitude.

Then, when I should tire of my delicious repose, of my immobility, of my eternal day dream; satiated with the calm enjoyment of my own well-being, I would order a horse to be brought to my door—a horse, black or white, as fleet as a gazelle.

And I would spring to his back, and in a furious gallop, quaff the tingling, intoxicating air.

And I would speed like an arrow, over the glowing country which fills the eyes with the delight and the intoxication of wine.

In the calm of eve, I would course madly toward the vast horizon tinged rose color in the setting sun. Out there all becomes pink in the twilight: the sun-burned mountains, the sand, the garments of the Arabs, the dromedaries, the horses, the tents! The rose-colored flamingoes fly upward from the marshes to the rose-colored sky, and I should scream with delight, plunged in the boundless infinite rosiness of all that surrounds me.

I shall no longer see black-coated men seated on uncomfortable chairs along the sidewalk, sipping absinthe and talking business amid the deafening roar of the vehicles as they roll along the streets.

I should ignore the state of the money market, political events, changes of ministry, all the useless frivolities on which we squander our short and vapid existence. Why should I undergo these worries, these sufferings, these struggles? I would rest sheltered from the wind in my bright and sumptuous dwelling.

The winged dream was floating before my closed eyelids and over my mind as it sank to rest; when I

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heard my men stirring, lighting the lantern, and setting to work at some lengthy and silent task.

I called out to them:

"What on earth are you doing?"

Raymond replied in a hesitating voice:

"We are getting some lines ready, sir; for we thought that you would like to fish, if it was fine enough at sunrise."

Agay, during the summer, is the rendezvous of all the fishermen along the coast. Whole families come here, sleeping at the inn or in the boats, eating *bouillabaisse* on the beach, under the shade of the pine trees, the resin of which crackles in the sun.

I inquired:

"What o'clock is it?"

"Three o'clock, sir."

Then, without rising, I stretched out my arm, and opened the door that separated my room from the forecabin.

The two men were squatting in the low den, through which the mast passes in fitting into the carline; the plale was full of such varied and strange things, that one might take it for a haunt of thieves; in perfect order along the partitions, instruments of all kinds were suspended: saws, axes, marline-spikes, pieces of rigging, and saucepans; on the floor between the two berths a pail, a stove, a barrel with its copper hoops, glistening under the direct ray of light from the lantern which hangs between the anchor bitts, by the side of the cable tiers; and my men were busy, baiting the innumerable hooks hanging all along the trawling line.

"At what hour must I get up?" I asked.

"Why, now, sir, at once."

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Half an hour after, we all three embarked on board the dingey, and left the *Bel-Ami* to go and spread our net at the foot of the Drammont, near the Ile d'Or.

Then when our line, some two or three hundred yards long, had sunk to the bottom, we baited three little deep-sea lines, and having anchored the boat by sinking a stone at the end of a rope, we began to fish.

It was already daylight, and I could distinctly see the coast of Saint-Raphaël, near the mouth of the Argens, and the sombre mountains of the Maures, themselves running out seaward as far as Cape Camarat, beyond the Gulf of Saint-Tropez.

Of all the southern coast, this is the spot I am fondest of. I love it as though I had been born there, as though I had grown up in it, because it is wild and glowing with color, and because the Parisian, the Englishman, the American, the man of fashion, and the adventurer have not yet poisoned it.

Suddenly the line I held in my hand quivered. I started, then felt nothing, and again a slight shock tightened the line wound round my finger, then another one, more violent, shook my whole hand, and with beating heart, I began to draw in the line, gently, eagerly, striving to peer through the transparent blue water, and soon I perceived in the shadow of the boat a white flash describing rapid circles.

The fish thus seen appeared to me enormous, and when on board it was no bigger than a sardine.

Then I caught many others, blue, red, yellow, green, glittering, silvery, striped, golden, speckled,

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spotted, those pretty rock fish of the Mediterranean so varied, so colored, that seem painted to please the eye; then sea-urchins covered with prickles, and those hideous monsters of the sea, conger eels.

Nothing can be more amusing than the raising of a trawling line. What will come out of the sea? What surprise, what pleasure, or what disappointment at each hook pulled out of the water! What a thrill runs through one when from afar some large creature is perceived struggling, as it rises slowly toward us!

At ten o'clock we had returned on board the yacht, and the two men, beaming with delight, informed me that our take weighed twenty-three pounds.

I was, however, doomed to pay dearly for my sleepless night! A sick headache, the dreadful pain that racks in a way no torture could equal, shatters the head, drives one crazy, bewilders the ideas, and scatters the memory like dust before the wind; a sick headache had laid hold of me, and I was perforce obliged to lie down in my bunk with a bottle of ether under my nostrils.

After a few minutes I fancied I heard a vague murmur which soon became a kind of buzzing, and it seemed as if all the interior of my body became light, as light as air, as though it were melting into vapor.

Then followed a numbness of spirit, a drowsy, comfortable state, in spite of the persisting pain, which, however, ceased to be acute. It was now a pain which one could consent to bear, and not any longer the terrible tearing agony, against which the whole tortured body rises in protest.

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Soon the strange and delightful sensation of vacuum I had in my chest extended and reached my limbs, which in their turn became light, light as though flesh and bone had melted away and skin only remained, just enough skin to permit of my feeling the sweetness of life and of enjoying my repose. Now I found that I no longer suffered. Pain had disappeared, melted, vanished into air. And I heard voices, four voices, two dialogues, without understanding the words. At times they were but indistinct sounds, at other times a word or two reached me. But I soon recognized that these were but the accentuated buzzing of my own ears. I was not sleeping; I was awake, I understood, I felt, I reasoned with a clearness, a penetration and power which were quite extraordinary, and a joyousness of spirit, a strange intoxication, produced by the tenfold acuteness of my mental faculties.

It was not a dream like that created by hashheesh nor the sickly visions produced by opium; it was a prodigious keenness of reasoning, a new manner of seeing, of judging, of estimating things and life, with the absolute consciousness, the certitude that this manner was the true one.

And the old simile of the Scriptures suddenly came back to my mind. It seemed to me that I had tasted of the tree of knowledge, that all mystery was unveiled, so strongly did I feel the power of this new, strange and irrefutable logic. And numberless arguments, reasonings, proofs rose up in my mind, to be, however, immediately upset by some proof, some reasoning, some argument yet more powerful. My brain had become a battlefield of ideas. I was a superior being, armed with an invincible intelligence,

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and I enjoyed prodigious happiness in the sensation of my power.

This state lasted a long, long time. I still inhaled the fumes of my ether bottle. Suddenly I perceived that it was empty. And I again began to suffer.

For ten hours I endured this torture for which there is no remedy, then I fell asleep, and the next day, brisk as after convalescence, having written these few pages, I left for Saint-Raphaël.

CHAPTER IV

SAINT-RAPHAËL, *April 11th.*

On our way here the weather was delightful and a light breeze carried us over in six tacks. After rounding the Drammont, I caught sight of the villas of Saint-Raphaël hidden among the pine trees, among the little slender pines beaten all the year round by the everlasting gusts of wind from Fréjus. Then I passed between the Lions, pretty red rocks that seemed to guard the town, and I entered the port, which, choked up with sand at the farther end, obliges one to remain some fifty yards off the quay. I then went on land.

A large crowd was gathered in front of the church. Some one was being married. A priest was authorizing in Latin with pontifical gravity the solemn and comical act which so disturbs mankind, bringing with it so much mirth, suffering and tears. According to custom, the families had invited all their relatives and friends to the funeral service of a young girl's innocence, to listen to the piously inde-

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corous ecclesiastical admonitions, preceding those of the mother, and to the public benediction, bestowed on that which is usually so carefully veiled.

And the whole countryside, full of broad jokes, moved by the greedy and idle curiosity that draws the common herd to such a scene, had come there to see how the bride and bridegroom would comport themselves. I mingled with the crowd and watched it.

Good heavens, how ugly human beings are! For at least the hundredth time I noticed, in the midst of this festive scene, that, of all races, the human race is the most hideous. The whole air was pervaded by the odor of the people, the nauseous, sickening odor of unclean bodies, greasy hair and garlic, that odor of garlic, exhaled by the people of the South, through nose, mouth and skin, just as roses spread abroad their perfume.

Men, of course, are always as ugly and always smell as obnoxious, but our eyes, accustomed to the sight of them, our nostrils used to their odor, fail to distinguish their ugliness and their emanations, unless we have been spared the sight and odor for some time.

Mankind is hideous! To obtain a gallery of grotesque figures, fit to raise a laugh from the dead, it would be sufficient to take the ten first-comers, set them in a line, and photograph them with their irregular heights, their legs either too long or too short, their bodies too fat or too thin, their red, pale, bearded, or smooth faces, their smirking or solemn looks.

Formerly, in primeval days, the wild man, the strong naked man, was certainly as handsome as the

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horse, the stag or the lion. The exercise of his muscles, a life free from restraint, the constant use of his vigor and his agility kept up in him a grace of motion, which is the first condition of beauty, and an elegance of form, which is produced only by physical exercise. Later on the artistic nations, enamored of form, knew how to preserve this grace and this elegance in intelligent man by the artificial means of gymnastics. The care bestowed on the body, the trials of strength and suppleness, the use of ice-cold water and vapor baths made the Greeks true models of human beauty, and they have left us their statues to show us what were the bodies of these great artists.

But now, O Apollo! look at the human race moving about in its festive scenes. The children rickety from the cradle, deformed by premature study, stupefied by the school life that wears out the body at fifteen years of age and cramps the mind before it is formed, reach adolescence with limbs badly grown, badly jointed, in which all normal proportions have completely disappeared.

And let us contemplate the people in the street trotting along in their dirty clothing! As for the peasant! Good heavens! Let us go and watch the peasant in the fields, his gnarled, knotted frame, lanky, twisted, bent, more hideous than the barbarous types exhibited in a museum of anthropology.

In comparison how splendid are those men of bronze, the negroes; in shape, if not in face; how elegant, both in their movements and their figure, the tall, lithe Arabs.

I have, however, another reason—my horror of crowds. I cannot go into a theatre, nor be present

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at any public entertainment. I at once experience a curious and unbearable feeling of discomfort, a horrible unnerving sensation, as though I were struggling with all my might against a mysterious and irresistible influence. And, in truth, I struggle with the spirit of the mob, which strives to take possession of me.

How often have I observed that the intelligence expands and grows loftier when we live alone, and that it contracts and deteriorates when we again mix with other men. The contact, the opinions floating in the air, all that is said, all that one is compelled to listen to, to hear, to answer, acts upon the mind. A flow and ebb of ideas goes from head to head, from house to house, from street to street, from town to town, from nation to nation, and a level is established, an average of intellect is created, by all large agglomerations of individuals.

The inherent qualities of intellectual initiative, of free will, of wise reflection, and even of sagacity, belonging to any individual being, generally disappear the moment that being is brought in contact with a large number of other human beings.

The following is a passage from a letter of Lord Chesterfield to his son (1751) which sets forth with rare humility the sudden elimination of all active qualities of the mind in every large body of people:

"Lord Macclesfield, who had the greatest share in drawing up the bill, and who is one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers in Europe, debated with a profound knowledge of the subject, and all the clearness that so intricate a matter would admit of, but as his words, his sentences, and his delivery were not equal in any way to my own, the prefer-

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ence was most unanimously, though most unjustly, given to me.

"This will ever be the case; every numerous assembly is a *mob*, let the individuals who compose it be what they will. Mere reason and good sense is never to be talked to a mob; their passions, their sentiments, their senses, and their apparent interests must alone be appealed to.

"Collectively, they have no intelligence, etc.

. . .

This deep observation of Lord Chesterfield's, a remark, however, that has often been made, and noted with interest by philosophers of the scientific school, constitutes one of the most serious arguments against representative government.

The same phenomenon, a surprising one, is produced each time a large number of men are gathered together. All these persons, side by side, distinct from each other, of different minds, intelligences, passions, education, beliefs, and prejudices, become suddenly, by the sole fact of their being assembled together, a special being, endowed with a new soul, a new manner of thinking in common, which is the unanalyzable resultant of the average of these individual opinions.

It is a crowd, and that crowd is a person, one vast collective individual, as distinct from any other mob as one man is distinct from any other man.

A popular saying asserts that "the mob does not reason." Now why does not the mob reason, since each particular individual in the crowd does reason? Why should a crowd do spontaneously what none of the units of the crowd would have done? Why has a crowd irresistible impulses, ferocious wills, stupid

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enthusiasms that nothing can arrest, and, carried away by these thoughtless impulses, why does it commit acts that none of the individuals composing it would commit alone?

Someone screams, and behold! a sort of frenzy takes possession of all; and all, with the same impulse, which no one tries to resist, carried away by the same thought, which instantaneously becomes common to all, notwithstanding different castes, opinions, beliefs and customs, will fall upon a man, murder him, drown him, without a motive, almost without a pretext, whereas each one of them, had he been alone, would have precipitated himself, at the risk of his life, to save the man he is now killing.

And in the evening, each one on returning home will ask himself what passion, or what madness, had seized him, and thrown his nature and his temperament out of its ordinary groove; how he could have given way to this savage impulse.

The fact is, he had ceased to be a man, to become one of a crowd. His personal will had become blended with the common will, as a drop of water is blended with a river and is lost in it.

His personality had disappeared, had become an infinitesimal particle of one vast and strange personality, that of the crowd. The panics which take hold of an army, the storms of opinion which carry away an entire nation, the frenzy of dervish dances, are striking examples of this identical phenomenon.

In short, it is not more surprising to see an agglomeration of individuals make one whole, than to see molecules that are placed near each other form one body.

To this mysterious attraction must without doubt

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be attributed the peculiar temperament of theatre audiences, and the strange difference of judgment that exists between the audience at a general rehearsal and that of a first-night audience, and again between a first-night audience and that of the succeeding performances, and the change in the impression produced, from one evening to another; and the errors of judgment that condemn a play like "Carmen," which, later on, turns out an immense success.

What I say about crowds must be applied to all society, and he who would carefully preserve the absolute integrity of his thought, the proud independence of his opinion, and look at life, humanity, and the universe as an impartial observer free from prejudice, preconceived belief and fear, must live absolutely apart from all social relations; for human stupidity is so contagious that he will be unable to associate with his fellow creatures, even see them, or listen to them, without being, in spite of himself, influenced on all sides by their conversations, their ideas, their superstitions, their traditions, their prejudices, which, through their customs, laws and surprisingly hypocritical and cowardly code of morality, will surely contaminate him.

Those who strive to resist these lowering and incessant influences struggle in vain amid petty, irresistible, innumerable and almost imperceptible fetters; and through sheer fatigue soon cease to fight.

A stir here took place in the crowd; the newly married couple were coming out. And immediately I followed the general example, raised myself on tip-toe to see—and longed to see—with a stupid, low, repugnant longing, the longing of the common herd.

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The curiosity of my neighbors had intoxicated me; I was one of a crowd.

To fill up the remainder of the day I decided on taking a row in my dingey up the Argens. This lovely and almost unknown river separates the plains of Fréjus from the wild mountain range of the Maures.

I took Raymond, who rowed me along the side of the low beach to the mouth of the river, which we found impracticable and partly filled up with sand. One channel alone communicated with the sea; but was so rapid, so full of foam, of eddies, and of whirlpools, that we were unable to ascend it.

We were therefore obliged to drag the boat to land, and carry it over the sand hills to a kind of beautiful lake formed by the Argens at this spot.

In the midst of a green and marshy country, of that rich green tint peculiar to trees growing in the water, the river flows between two banks, so covered with verdure, and with such high, impenetrable foliage, that the neighboring mountains are barely visible. It winds along, pursuing its course unperceived amid the calm, lonely and magnificent country, and looks like a peaceful lake.

As in the low northern plains, where the springs ooze out beneath one's feet, running over and vivifying the earth like blood, the clear, cold blood of the soil, so here we find again the same strange sensation of exuberant nature which floats over all damp countries.

Birds, with long legs dangling as they fly, spring up from among the reeds, stretching their pointed beaks heavenward; while others, broad-winged and slow, pass from one bank to another with heavy

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flight, and others, smaller and more rapid, skim along the surface of the river, darting forward like rebounding pebbles. Innumerable turtle doves cooing on the heights, or wheeling about, fly from tree to tree, and seem to exchange messages of love. One feels that all around this deep water, throughout all this plain, up to the foot of the mountains, there is yet more water; the treacherous water of the marsh, sleeping yet living; broad clear sheets, in which the skies are mirrored, over which the clouds flit by; in which, widely scattered, all manner of strange rushes spring up; the fertile limpid water, full of rotting life and deadly fermentation; water breeding fever and miasma, a food and a poison at the same time, spreading itself out in attractive loveliness over the mysterious mass of putrefaction beneath it. The atmosphere is delightful, relaxing, and dangerous. On all the banks which separate the vast still pools, amid all the thick grasses, swarm, crawl, jump, and creep a whole world of slimy, repugnant, cold-blooded animals. I love those cold, gliding animals that are generally avoided and dreaded; for me there is something sacred about them.

At the hour of sunset the marsh intoxicates and excites me. After having been all day a great silent pond lying hushed in the heat, it becomes at the moment of twilight a fairy-like and enchanted country. In its calm and boundless depths the skies are mirrored: skies of gold, skies of blood, skies of fire; they sink in it, bathe in it, float and are drowned in it. They are there up above, in the immensity of the firmament, and they are there below, beneath us, so near and yet so completely beyond our touch, in

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that shallow pool, through which the pointed grasses push their way like bristling hairs. All the color with which earth has been endowed, charming, varied and enthralling, appears to us deliciously painted, admirably resplendent, and infinitely shaded around a single leaf of the water-lily. Every shade of red, rose, yellow, blue, green and violet is there, in a little patch of water which shows us the heavens, and space, and dreamland, and the flight of the birds as they skim across its face; and then there is still something else—I know not what—in the marshes at sunset. I feel, as it were, a confused revelation of some unknown mystery, the original breath of primeval life, which was perhaps nothing more than a bubble of gas rising from a swamp at the close of day.

CHAPTER V

SAINT-TROPEZ, *April 12th.*

We left Saint-Raphaël at about eight o'clock this morning, with a strong northwest breeze.

The sea in the gulf, though it had no waves, was white with foam, white like a mass of soapsuds, for the wind, the terrible wind from Fréjus which blows almost every morning, seemed to throw itself on the water, as though it would tear it to pieces, raising a rolling mass of little waves of froth, scattered one moment, re-formed the next.

The people at the port having assured us that this squall would fall toward eleven o'clock, we decided upon starting with three reefs in, and the storm jib.

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The dingey was placed on board at the foot of the mast, and the *Bel-Ami* seemed to fly directly it left the jetty. Although it carried scarcely any sail, I had never felt it dash along like this. It seemed to scarcely touch the water, and one would never have suspected that it carried at the bottom of its large keel, two and a half yards deep, a slab of lead weighing over thirty hundredweight, besides thirty-eight hundredweight of ballast in its hold, besides all we had on board in the shape of rigging, anchors, cables and furniture.

I had soon crossed the bay, at the farther end of which the Argens flows into the sea; and as soon as I was under shelter of the coast the breeze calmed down. It is there that the splendid, sombre and wild region begins which is still called the land of the Moors. It is a long peninsula, composed of mountains, with a contour of coasts over sixty miles long.

Saint-Tropez, situated at the entry of the lovely gulf, formerly called Gulf of Grimaud, is the capital of the little Saracen kingdom, of which nearly every village, built on the summit of a peak in order to secure it from attack, is still full of Moorish houses with arcades, narrow windows, and inner courtyards, wherein tall palm trees have grown up, and are now higher than the roofs.

If one penetrates on foot into the unknown valleys of this strange group of mountains, one discovers an incredibly wild country, devoid of roads and lanes; without even footpaths, without hamlets, without houses.

At intervals, after seven or eight hours' walking, appears a hovel, often abandoned. or sometimes in-

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habited by a poverty-stricken family of charcoal burners.

The Monts des Maures have, it appears, a geological formation peculiar to themselves, a matchless flora said to be the most varied in Europe, and immense forests of pine, chestnut and cork trees.

Some three years ago I made an excursion into the very heart of the country, to the ruins of the Chartreuse de la Verne, and have retained an ineffaceable recollection of it. If it is fine to-morrow I shall return there.

A new road follows the sea, going from Saint-Raphaël to Saint-Tropez. All along this magnificent avenue, opened up through the forest by the side of a matchless beach, new winter resorts are being started. The first one planned is called Saint-Aigulf.

This bears a peculiar stamp. In the midst of a forest of fir trees stretching down to the sea, wide roads are laid out in every direction. There is not a house, nothing but the barely indicated plan of the streets, running through the trees. Here are the squares, the cross-roads, and the boulevards. The names are even written upon metal tablets: Boulevard Ruysdaël, Boulevard Rubens, Boulevard Van Dyck, Boulevard Claude Lorrain. One asks: Why the names of all these painters? Why, indeed? Simply because the *Company* has decided, like God before He lit the sun: "This shall be an artists' resort!"

The *Company*! The rest of the world does not know all this world contains of hopes, dangers, money gained, and money lost on the Mediterranean

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shores! The *Company*! Fatal and mysterious word, deep and deceiving!

In this instance, however, the *Company* seems to have realized its expectations, for it has already found purchasers, and of the best, among artists. At various places one reads: "Building lot bought by M. Carolus Duran; another by M. Clairin, another by Mlle. Croizette," etc. Nevertheless—who can tell? The Mediterranean Companies are not in luck just now. Nothing is more ludicrous than this fury of speculation, which generally ends in terrible failures. Whosoever has gained ten thousand francs on a piece of land at once buys ten million francs' worth of land at twenty sous the metre, in order to sell it again at twenty francs the metre. Boulevards are laid out, water pipes put in, gas works established, and the purchaser is hopefully expected.

The purchaser does not make his appearance, but, instead of him—ruin.

Far off, ahead of me, I perceive the towers and the buoys that mark the breakers on both sides at the opening of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez.

The first tower is called "Tour des Sardinaux," and marks a regular shoal of rocks, level with the top of the water, some of which just show the tips of their brown heads; the second one has been christened "Balise de la Sèche à l'huile" (buoy of the oily cuttle-fish).

We now reach the entrance of the gulf, which extends back between two ridges of mountains and forests as far as the village of Grimaud, built at the very extremity, on a height. The ancient castle of Grimaldi, a tall ruin that overlooks the village, ap-

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pears in the distant haze like the evocation of some fairy scene.

The wind has fallen. The gulf looks like an immense calm lake, into which, taking advantage of the last puffs of the squall, we slowly make our way.

To the right of the channel, Sainte-Maxime, a little white port, is mirrored in the water, which reflects the houses topsy-turvy, and reproduces them as distinctly as on shore. Opposite, Saint-Tropez appears, guarded by an old fort.

At seven o'clock *Bel-Ami* anchored by the quay, at the side of the little steamboat which carries on the service with Saint-Raphaël. The only means of communication between this isolated little port and the rest of the world is by this *Lion de Mer*, an old pleasure yacht, which runs in connection with a venerable diligence that carries the letters and travels at night by the one road which crosses the mountains.

This is one of those charming and simple daughters of the sea, one of those nice modest little towns that has grown out of the water like a shell, feeds upon fish and sea air and breeds sailors. On the jetty stands a bronze statue of the Bailli de Suffren.

The pervading odor is of fish and smoking tar, of brine and hulls of vessels. The stones in the streets glitter like pearls, with the scales of the sardines, and along the walls of the port a population of lame and paralyzed old sailors bask in the sun on the stone benches. From time to time they talk of past voyages, and of those they have known in bygone days, the grandfathers of the small boys running yonder. Their hands and faces are wrinkled, tanned,

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browned, dried by the wind, by fatigue, by the spray, by the heat of the tropics and by the icy cold of northern seas, for they have seen, in their roamings over the ocean, the ins and outs of the world, every aspect of the earth and of all latitudes. In front of them, propped up on a stick, passes and repasses the old captain of the merchant service, who formerly commanded the *Trois-Sœurs*, or the *Deux-Amis*, or the *Marie-Louise*, or the *Jeune-Clémentine*.

All salute him, like soldiers answering the roll-call, with a litany of "Good-day, captain," modulated in many tones.

This is a true land of the sea, a brave little town, briny and courageous, which fought in days of yore against the Saracens, against the Duc d'Anjou, against the wild corsairs, against the Connétable de Bourbon, and Charles Quint, and the Duc de Savoie, and the Duc d'Épernon. In 1637 the inhabitants, ancestors of these peaceful citizens, without any assistance, repelled the Spanish fleet, and every year they give with surprising realism a representation of the attack and their defence, filling the town with noisy bustle and clamor, strangely recalling the great popular festivities of the middle ages.

In 1813 the town likewise repulsed an English flotilla that had been sent against it.

Now it is a fishing town, and the produce of its fisheries supplies the greater part of the coast with tunny, sardines, red snappers, rock lobsters and all the pretty fish of this blue sea.

On setting foot on the quay, after having dressed myself, I heard twelve o'clock strike, and I perceived two old clerks, notary or lawyers' clerks, going off to their midday meal, like two old beasts of burden,

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unbridled for a few minutes while they eat their oats at the bottom of a nosebag.

Oh, liberty, liberty! Our sole happiness, sole hope, sole dream! Of all the miserable creatures, of all classes of individuals, of all orders of workers, of all the men who daily fight the hard battle of life, these are the most to be pitied; on these does Fortune bestow the fewest of her favors.

No one believes this—no one knows it. They are powerless to complain; they cannot revolt; they remain gagged and bound in their misery, the shame-faced misery of quill-drivers.

They have gone through a course of study, they understand law, they have taken a degree, perhaps.

How dearly I like that dedication by Jules Vallès:

“To all those who, nourished upon Greek and Latin, have died of starvation.”

And what do they earn, these starvelings? Eight to fifteen hundred francs a year!

Clerks in gloomy chambers, or clerks in office, you should read every morning over the door of your fatal prison Dante's famous phrase:

“Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!”

They are but twenty when they first enter and will remain till sixty or longer. During this long period not an event takes place! Their whole life slips away in the dark little bureau, ever the same, its walls lined with green portfolios. They enter young, in the full vigor of hope; they leave in old age, when death is at hand. All the harvest of recollections that we gather in a lifetime, the unexpected events, our loves—gentle or tragic memories—our adventures, all the incidents of a free existence, are unknown to these convicts.

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The days, the weeks, the months, the seasons, the years, all are alike. They begin the day's work at the same hour; at the same hour they breakfast; at the same hour they leave; and this goes on for sixty or seventy years. Four accidents only constitute landmarks in their existence: marriage, the birth of the first-born, the death of father and that of the mother. Nothing else; stop, though—yes, a rise in salary. They know nothing of ordinary life, nothing of the world! Unknown to them are the days of cheerful sunshine in the streets and idle wanderings through the fields, for they are never released before the appointed hour. They become voluntary prisoners at eight o'clock in the morning and at six the prison doors are opened for them, when night is at hand. But, as a compensation, they have, for a whole fortnight in the year, the right—a right indeed much discussed, hardly bargained for and grudgingly granted—to remain shut up in their lodgings. For where can they go without money?

The builder climbs skyward; the driver prowls about the streets; the railway mechanic traverses woods, mountains, plains, moves incessantly from the walls of the town to the vast blue horizon of the sea. The employee never quits his bureau, his living coffin, and in the same little mirror wherein he saw himself a young fellow with fair mustache, on the day of his arrival, he contemplates himself bald and white-bearded on the day of his dismissal. Then all is finished, life is played out, the future closed. How can he have reached this point? How can one have grown old without any event having occurred, without having been startled by any of the surprises

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of existence? It is so, nevertheless. He must now make way for the young, for the young beginners!

Then the unfortunate mortal steals away, more wretched than before, and dies almost immediately from the sudden snapping of the long and obstinate habit of his daily routine, the dreary routine of the same movements, the same actions, the same tasks at the same hours.

As I went into the hotel for breakfast, an alarmingly big package of letters and papers was handed to me, and my heart sank as at the prospect of some misfortune. I have a fear and a hatred of letters; they are bonds. Those little squares of paper bearing my name seem to give out a noise of chains as I tear them open—of chains linking me to living creatures I know or have known.

Each one inquires, although written by different hands: "Where are you? What are you doing? Why disappear in this way, without telling us where you are going? With whom are you hiding?" Another adds: "How can you expect people to care for you if you run away in this fashion from your friends? It is positively wounding to their feelings."

Well, then, don't attach yourselves to me! Will no one endeavor to understand affection without joining thereto a notion of possession and despotism? It would seem as if social ties could not exist without entailing obligations, susceptibilities and a certain amount of subserviency. From the moment one has smiled upon the attentions of a stranger, this stranger has a hold upon you, is inquisitive about your movements and reproaches you with neglecting him. If we get as far as friendship, each one imagines himself to have certain claims; intercourse

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becomes a duty, and the bonds which unite us seem to end in slip-knots which draw tighter. This affectionate solicitude, this suspicious, tyrannous, clinging jealousy on the part of beings who have met casually, and who fancy themselves linked together because they have proved to be mutually agreeable, arises solely from the harassing fear of solitude which haunts mankind upon this earth.

Each of us, feeling the void around him, the unfathomable depth in which his heart beats, his thoughts struggle, wanders on like a madman, with open arms and eager lips, seeking some other being to embrace. And embrace he does, to the right, to the left, at haphazard, without knowing, without looking, without understanding—that he may not feel alone. He seems to say, from the moment he has shaken hands, “Now, you belong to me a little. You owe me some part of yourself, of your life, of your thoughts, of your time.” And that is why so many people believe themselves to be friends who know nothing whatever of each other, so many start off hand in hand, heart to heart, without having really had one good look at one another. They must care for some one, in order not to be alone, their affection must be expended in friendship or in love, but some vent must be found for it incessantly. And they talk of affection, swear it, become enthusiastic over it, pour their whole heart into some unknown heart found only the evening before, all their soul into some chance soul with a face that has pleased. And from this haste to become united arise all the surprises, mistakes, misunderstandings and dramas of life.

Just as we remain lonely and alone, notwithstand-

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ing all our efforts, so in like manner we remain free, notwithstanding all our ties.

No one ever belongs to another. Half unconsciously we lend ourselves to the comedy—coquettish or passionate—of possession, but no one really gives himself—his ego—to another human being. Man, exasperated by this imperious need to be the master of some one, instituted tyranny, slavery and marriage. He can kill, torture, imprison, but the human will inevitably escapes him, even when it has for a few moments consented to submission.

Do mothers even own their children? Does not the tiny being but just entered into the world set to work to cry for what he wants, to announce his separate existence and proclaim his independence?

Does a woman ever really belong to you? Do you know what she thinks, whether, even, she really adores you? You kiss her sweet body, waste your whole soul on her perfect lips; a word from your mouth or from hers—one single word—is enough to open between you a gulf of implacable hatred!

All sentiments of affection lose their charm when they become authoritative. Because it gives me pleasure to see and talk with some one, does it follow that I should be permitted to know what he does and what he likes? The bustle of towns, both great and small, of all classes of society, the mischievous, envious, evil-speaking, calumniating curiosity, the incessant watchfulness of the affections and conduct of others, of their gossip and their scandals—are they not all born of that pretension we have to control the conduct of others, as if we all belonged to each other in varying degrees? And we do in fact imagine that we have some rights over them, and

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on their life, for we would fain model it upon our own; on their thoughts, for we expect them to be of the same style as our own; on their opinions, in which we will not tolerate any difference from ours; on their reputation, for we expect it to conform to our principles; on their habits, for we swell with indignation when they are not according to our notions of morality.

I was breakfasting at the end of a long table in the Hotel Bailli de Suffren, and still occupied with the perusal of my letters and papers, when I was disturbed by the noisy conversation of some half-dozen men, seated at the other end.

They were commercial travellers. They talked on every subject with assurance, with contempt, in a bragging, authoritative manner, and they gave me the clearest understanding of what constitutes the true French spirit; that is to say, the average of the intelligence, logic, sense and wit of France. One of them, a big fellow with a shock of red hair, wore a military medal and also one for saving a life—a fine fellow. Another, a fat little roundabout, made puns without ceasing, and laughed till his sides ached at his own jokes before the others had time to understand them. Another man, with close-cut hair, was reorganizing the army and the magistracy, reforming the laws and the constitution, planning an ideal republic to suit his own views as a traveller in the wine trade. Two others, side by side, were amusing each other thoroughly with the narrative of their *bonnes fortunes*, incidents in back parlors of shops and conquests of servant girls.

And in them I saw France personified, the witty, versatile, brave and gallant France of tradition.

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These men were types of the race, vulgar types, it is true, but which have but to be poetized a little to find in them the Frenchman such as history—that lying and imaginative old dame—shows him to us.

And ours is really an amusing race, by reason of certain very special qualities, which one finds absolutely nowhere else.

First and foremost comes our versatility, which so agreeably diversifies both our customs and institutions. It is this which makes the history of our country resemble some surprising tale of adventure in a *feuilleton*, the pages of which “to be continued in the next number” are full of the most unexpected events, tragic, comic, terrible, grotesque. One may be angry or indignant over it, according to one’s way of thinking, but it is none the less certain that no history in the world is more amusing and more sitrring than ours.

From the pure art point of view—and why should one not admit this special and disinterested point of view in politics as well as in literature?—it remains without a rival. What can be more strange and more surprising than the events which have taken place only in the last century?

What will to-morrow bring forth? This expectation of the unforeseen is, after all, very charming. Everything is possible in France, even the most wildly improbable drolleries and the most tragic adventures.

What could surprise us? When a country has produced a Joan of Arc and a Napoleon, it may well be considered miraculous soil.

And then, the French love women; they love them

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dearly, with passion and with delicacy, with intelligence and with respect.

Our gallantry cannot be compared to anything in any other country.

He who has preserved in his heart the spark of gallantry of later centuries surrounds women with a tenderness at once profound, gentle, sensitive and vigilant. He loves everything that belongs to them, everything that comes from them, everything that they are, everything they do. He loves their toilet, their knickknacks, their adornments, their artifices, their naïvetés, their little perfidies, their lies and their dainty ways. He loves them all, rich as well as poor, the young and even the old, the dark, the fair, the fat, the thin. He feels himself at his ease with them and among them. He could remain with them indefinitely, without fatigue, without ennui, happy in the mere fact of their presence.

He knows, from the very first word, how to show them by a look, by a smile that he adores them, to arouse their attention, to increase their desire to please, to display for his benefit all their powers of seduction. Between them and him there is established at once a quick sympathy, a fellowship of instincts, almost a relationship through similarity of character and nature.

Then begins between them and him a combat of coquetry and gallantry, a mysterious and antagonistic sort of friendship is cemented, and an unseen affinity of heart and mind is formed.

He knows how to say what will please them, how to make them understand what he thinks; how to make known, without ever shocking them, without offending their delicate and watchful modesty, the

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discreet yet ardent admiration always burning in his eyes, always trembling on his lips, always alight in his veins. He is their friend and their slave, the humble servitor of their caprices and the admirer of their persons. He is ever at their beck and call, ready to help them, to defend them, as though they were secret allies. He would love to devote himself to them, not only to those he knows slightly, but to those he does not know, those he has never even seen.

He asks nothing of them but a little pretty affection, a little confidence or a little interest, a little graciousness or even disloyal trickery.

He loves the woman who passes by in the street and whose glance falls upon him. He loves the young girl with hair streaming down her shoulders, a blue bow on her head, a flower in her bosom, who moves with slow or hurried step, timid or bold eye, through the throng on the pavement. He loves the unknown ones he elbows, the little shopwoman who dreams on her doorstep, the fine lady who lazily reclines in her open carriage.

From the moment he finds himself face to face with a woman, his heart is stirred and his best powers are awakened. He thinks of her, talks for her, tries to please her and to let her understand that she pleases him. Tender expressions rise to his lips, his glance is a caress; he is filled with a longing to kiss her hand, to touch even the material of her dress. For him it is women who adorn the world and make life seductive.

He likes to sit at their feet for the mere pleasure of being there; he likes to meet their eye, merely to catch a glimps of their veiled and fleeting thoughts;

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he likes to listen to their voice solely because it is the voice of woman.

It is by them and for them that the Frenchman has learned to converse and to display the ready wit which distinguishes him.

To converse—what is it? It is the art of never seeming wearisome, of knowing how to invest every trifle with interest, to interest, no matter what be the subject, to fascinate with absolutely nothing.

How can one describe the airy, butterfly touch of an epigram, that game of battledore and shuttlecock with supple words, that running fire of wit, that dainty flitting of ideas that should all go to make up conversation!

The Frenchman is the only being in the world who has this subtle spirit of wit, and he alone thoroughly enjoys and comprehends it.

He has the wit that is evanescent and the wit that endures, the wit of the streets and the wit of literature.

That which endures is wit in the largest sense of the word, that vast breath of irony or mirth which has animated the nation from the moment it could think or speak; it is the pungent raciness of Montaigne and Rabelais, the irony of Voltaire, of Beaumarchais, of Saint-Simon and the inextinguishable laughter of Molière.

The brilliant sally, the neat epigram is the small coin of this wit. And, nevertheless, it is one aspect of it, a characteristic peculiarity of our national intelligence. It is one of its keenest charms. It is this that makes the sceptical gaiety of Paris life, the cheerful freedom of our manners and customs. It is part and parcel of our social amenity.



*"It winds along, pursuing its course unperceived
amid the calm, lonely, and magnificent coun-
try, and looks like a peaceful lake."*

—*Sur L'Eau*, p. 75.

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Formerly these amusing witticisms were in verse; nowadays they appear in prose. They are called, according to the period, epigrams, *bon-mots*, traits, hits, *gauloiseries*. They are current in town and drawing-room, they spring up everywhere, on the boulevard as well as in Montmartre. And those of Montmartre are often just as good as those of the boulevard; they are printed in the papers; from one end of France to the other they excite laughter. For the French know how to laugh.

Why should one saying more than another, the unexpected, quaint juxtaposition of two terms, two ideas, or even two sounds, a ridiculous pun, some unexpected cock-and-bull story, open the floodgates of our mirth, causing explosions of laughter, like a blast fit to blow up all Paris and the provinces?

Why do all the French laugh, while all the English and the Germans can see no reason for our mirth? Why? Solely and wholly because they are French, because they possess the French wit and the delightful, enviable gift of laughter.

With them, moreover, a little wit is all that is necessary for a ruler.

Good humor takes the place of genius; a witty saying consecrates a man at once and makes him great for all posterity. The rest matters little. The nation loves those who amuse it and forgives everything to those who can make it laugh.

A single glance over the past history of France will make us understand that the fame of their great men has only been made by flashes of wit. The most detestable princes have become popular through amusing jokes, repeated and remembered from century to century.

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The throne of France is maintained by the cap and bells of the jester.

Epigrams, nothing but epigrams, ironic or heroic, polished or coarse—epigrams float forever on the surface of their history and make it like nothing so much as a collection of puns and witticisms.

Clovis, the Christian king, cried on hearing the story of the Passion:

“Why was I not there with my Franks?” This prince, in order to reign alone, massacred his allies and his relatives and committed every crime imaginable. Nevertheless he is looked upon as a pious and progressive monarch.

“Why was I not there with my Franks?”

We should know nothing of good King Dagobert if the rhyme had not apprised us of a few particulars, no doubt erroneous, of his existence.

Pepin, wishing to remove King Childeric from the throne, proposed to Pope Zacharias the following insidious question:

“Which of the two is the more worthy to reign, he who worthily fulfills all the kingly functions without the title or he who bears the title without knowing how to reign?”

What do we know of Louis VI.? Nothing! Pardon me. In the battle of Brenneville, when an Englishman laid hands upon him, crying, “The king is taken,” this truly French monarch replied, “Do you know, knave, that a king can never be taken, even at chess?”

Louis IX., saint though he was, has not left a single good saying to remember him by. In consequence his reign appears to the French a wearisome episode, full of orisons and penances.

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That noodle, Philip VI., beaten and wounded at the battle of Crécy, cried as he knocked at the gates of the castle of Arbroie: "Open! It is the fortune of France!" They are still grateful to him for this melodramatic speech. John II., made prisoner by the Prince of Waltes, remarks with chivalrous good will and the graceful gallantry of a French troubadour: "I had counted upon entertaining you at supper to-night, but fortune wills otherwise and ordains that I should sup with you."

It would be impossible to bear adversity more gracefully.

"It is not for the King of France to avenge the quarrels of the Duke of Orleans" was the generous declaration of Louis XII. And it is, truly, a kingly saying, one worthy of the remembrance of all princes.

That harebrained fellow, Francis I., more apt at the pursuit of the fair sex than at the conduct of a campaign, has saved his reputation and surrounded his name with an imperishable halo by writing to his mother those few superb words after the defeat of Pavia: "All is lost, madame, save honor."

Does not that phrase remain to this day as good as a victory? Has it not made this prince more illustrious than the conquest of a kingdom? We have forgotten the names of the greater number of the famous battles fought in these long bygone days, but shall we ever forget "All is lost save honor"?

Henry IV.! Hats off, gentlemen! Here is the master! Sly, sceptical, tricky, deceitful beyond belief, artful beyond compare, a drunkard, debauchee, unbeliever, he managed by a few happy and pointed sayings to make for himself in history an admirable

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reputation as a chivalrous, generous king, a brave, loyal and honest man.

Oh, the knave! Well did he know how to play upon human stupidity!

"Hang yourself, brave Crillon; we have gained the day without you."

After a speech like this, a general is always ready to be hanged or killed for his master's sake.

At the opening of the famous battle of Ivry: "Children, if the colors fall, rally to my white plume; you will find it always on the path of honor and victory."

How could a man fail to be victorious who knew how to speak thus to his captains and his troops?

This sceptical monarch wishes for Paris, he longs for it, but he must choose between his faith and the beautiful city. "Enough," he mutters; "after all, Paris is well worth a mass!" And he changes his religion as he would have changed his coat. Is it not a fact, however, that the witticism caused a ready acceptance of the deed? "Paris is well worth a mass" raised a laugh among the choicer spirits and there was no violent indignation at his seizure of it.

Did he not become the patron saint of all fathers of families by the question put to the Spanish ambassador who found him playing at horses with the dauphin: "Are you a father, M. l'Ambassadeur?"

The Spaniard replied: "Yes, sir."

"In that case," said the king, "I will go on playing."

But he made a conquest for all eternity of the heart of France, of the *bourgeoisie* and of the people by the finest phrase that prince ever pronounced—a

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real inspiration of genius, full of depth, good humor, shrewdness and good sense.

"If God prolongs my life, I hope to see in my kingdom no peasant so poor that he cannot put a fowl in the pot for his Sunday's dinner."

It is with words such as these that enthusiastic and simple crowds are flattered and governed. By a couple of clever sayings Henry IV. has drawn his own portrait for posterity. One cannot pronounce his name without at once having a vision of the white plume and of the delicious flavor of a *poule-au-pot*.

Louis XIII. made no epigrams. This dull king had a dull reign.

Louis XIV. created the formula of absolute personal power: "The State is myself."

He gave the measure of royal pride in its fullest expansion: "I have almost had to wait."

He set the example of sonorous political phrases which make alliances between two nations: "The Pyrenees exist no longer!"

All his reign is in these few phrases.

Louis XV., most corrupt of kings, elegant and witty, has bequeathed to posterity that delightful keynote of his supreme indifference: "After me, the deluge."

If Louis XVI. had been inspired enough to perpetrate one witticism, he might possibly have saved his kingdom. With one epigram might he not have escaped the guillotine?

Napoleon I. scattered around him by handfuls the sayings that were suited to the hearts of his soldiers.

Napoleon III. extinguished with one brief phrase all the future indignation of the French nation in

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that first promise: "The Empire is peace." The Empire is peace! Superb declaration, magnificent lie! After having said that, he might declare war against the whole of Europe without having anything to fear from his people. He had found a simple, neat and striking formula, capable of appealing to all minds, and against which facts would be no argument.

He made war against China, Mexico, Russia, Austria, against all the world. What did it matter? There are people yet who speak with sincere conviction of the eighteen years of tranquillity he gave to France: "The Empire is peace."

And it was also with his keen words of satire, phrases more mortal than bullets, that M. Rochefort laid the Empire low, riddling it with the arrows of his wit, cutting it to shreds and tatters.

The Maréchal MacMahon himself has left as a souvenir of his rise to power: "Here I am, here I remain!" And it was by a shaft from Gambetta that he was, in his turn, knocked down: "Submission or dismissal."

With these two words, more powerful than a revolution, more formidable than the barricades, more invincible than an army, more redoubtable than all the votes, the tribune turned out the soldier, crushed his glory and destroyed his power and prestige.

As to those who govern France at this moment, they must fall, for they are devoid of wit; they will fall, for in the day of danger, in the day of disturbance, in the inevitable moment of seesaw, they will not be capable of making France laugh and of disarming her.

Of all these historical phrases, there are not ten

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really authentic. But what does it matter, so long as they are believed to have been uttered by those to whom they are attributed?

"In the land of hunchbacks
One must be a hunchback,
Or at least appear so."

says the popular song.

Meanwhile the commercial travellers were talking of the emancipation of women, of their rights and the new position they longed to occupy in society.

Some approved, others were annoyed; the little fat man jested without ceasing and ended the breakfast, as well as the discussion, by the following entertaining anecdote:

"Lately," said he, "there was a great meeting in England, where this question was discussed. One of the orators had been setting forth numerous arguments in favor of the women's cause, and wound up with this observation:

"To conclude, gentlemen, I may observe that the difference between man and woman is, after all, very small."

"A powerful voice, from an enthusiastic and thoroughly convinced listener, arose from the audience, crying: 'Hurrah for the small difference!'"

CHAPTER VI

SAINT-TROPEZ, *April 13th.*

As it was remarkably fine this morning I started for the Chartreuse de la Verne.

Two recollections draw me toward this ruin, that of the sensation of infinite solitude and the unforget-

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table melancholy of the deserted cloister, and that of an old peasant couple to whose cottage I had been taken the year before by a friend who was guiding me across this country of the Moors.

Seated in a country cart, for the road soon became impracticable for a vehicle on springs, I followed the line of the bay to its deepest point. I could see upon the opposite shore the pine woods where the *Company* is attempting to create another winter resort. The shore is indeed exquisite, and the whole country magnificent. Then the road goes through the mountains, and soon crosses the town of Cogolin. A little farther on I left it and took a rough, uneven road which was scarcely more than a long ditch. A river, or rather a big stream, runs by the side, and every hundred yards or so cuts through it, floods it, wanders away a little, returns, loses itself again, leaves its bed and drowns the track, then falls into a ditch, strays through a field of stones, appears suddenly to calm down into wisdom, and for a while follows its proper course; but seized all at once by some wild fancy, it precipitates itself again into the road, and changes it into a marsh, in which the horse sinks up to the neck and the high vehicle up to the driver's seat.

There are no more houses, only from time to time a charcoal burner's hut; the poorest live in absolute holes. Is it not almost incredible that men should inhabit holes in the ground, where they live all the year, cutting wood and burning it to extract the charcoal, eating bread and onions, drinking water, and sleeping like rabbits in their burrows, in narrow caverns hewn in the granite rocks? Lately, too, in the midst of these unexplored valleys, a her-

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mit has been discovered, a real hermit, hidden there for these thirty years, unknown to any one, even to the forest rangers.

The existence of this wild man, revealed by I know not whom, was, no doubt, mentioned to the driver of the diligence, who spoke of it to the post-master, who talked of it to the telegraph clerk, male or female, who flew with the wonder to the editor of some little local paper, who made out of it a sensational paragraph, copied into all the newspapers of Provence.

The police set to work to hunt out the hermit, without apparently causing him any alarm, whence we may conclude that he had kept all needful papers by him. But a photographer, excited by the news, set off in his turn, wandered three days and three nights among the mountains, and ended by photographing some one—the real hermit some say; an impostor, others will tell you.

Last year, then, the friend who first revealed to me this strangely quaint country showed me two creatures infinitely more curious than the poor devil who had come to bury in these impenetrable woods a grief, a remorse, an incurable despair, or perhaps simply the mere ennui of living.

This is how he first discovered them. Wandering on horseback among these valleys, he suddenly came across a prosperous farm—vines, fields, and a farmhouse which looked comfortable though humble.

He entered. He was received by a woman, a peasant, about seventy years old. The husband, seated under a tree, rose and came forward to bow.

"He is deaf," she said.

He was a fine old fellow of eighty, amazingly

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strong, upright, and handsome. They had for servants a laborer and a farm girl. My friend, a little surprised to meet these singular persons in the midst of a desert, inquired about them. They had been there for a long time; they were much respected, and passed for being comfortably off—that is, for peasants.

He came back several times to visit them, and little by little became the confidant of the wife. He brought her papers and books, being surprised to find that she had some ideas, or, rather, remains of ideas, which scarcely seemed those of her class. She was, however, neither well read, intelligent, nor witty; but there seemed to be, in the depths of her memory, traces of forgotten thoughts, a slumbering recollection of a bygone education. One day she asked him his name.

"I am the Count de X——," he said.

Moved by the secret pride which lies hidden in the depths of all souls, she replied:

"I, too, am noble."

Then she went on, speaking assuredly for the first time in her life of this incident of former days, unknown to any one.

"I am the daughter of a colonel. My husband was a non-commissioned officer in my father's regiment. I fell in love with him, and we ran away together."

"And you came here?"

"Yes, we hid ourselves."

"And you have never seen your family since?"

"Oh, no! Don't you see, my husband was a deserter."

"You have never written to any one?"

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"Oh, no!"

"And you have never heard any one speak of your family, of your father or mother?"

"Oh, no; mamma was dead."

This woman had preserved a certain childishness, the simplicity of those who throw themselves into love as they would over a precipice.

He asked again:

"You have never told this to any one?"

She answered: "Oh, no! I can say it now, because Maurice is deaf. As long as he could hear, I should not have dared to mention it. Besides, I have never seen any one but peasants since I ran away."

"At least, then, you have been happy?"

"Oh, yes, very happy. I have been very happy. I have never regretted anything."

I also had been to visit this woman, this couple, the previous year, as one goes to gaze at some miraculous relic.

I had looked with surprise, sadness, and even a little disgust, at the woman who had followed this man, this rustic Adonis, attracted by his uniform of a mounted hussar, and who had continued to see him, beneath his peasant's rags, with the blue dolman slung over his back, his sword at his side, and his high boots with clanking spurs.

She had, however, become a peasant herself. In the depths of this wilderness she had become perfectly accustomed to this life without luxuries, without charm or delicacy of any sort; she had adapted herself to these simple manners. And she loved him still. She had become a woman of the people, in cap and coarse petticoat. Seated on a straw-bot-

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tomed chair at a wooden table, she ate a mess of cabbage, potatoes and bacon from an earthenware plate. She slept on a straw mattress beside him.

She had never thought of anything but him! She had regretted neither ornaments, nor silks, nor elegance, nor soft chairs, nor the perfumed warmth of well-curtained rooms nor repose in a comfortable bed. She had never needed anything but him! As long as he was there, she had wanted nothing else.

She was quite young when she abandoned life, the world, and those who had brought her up and loved her. Alone with him she had come to this wild ravine. And he had been everything to her, everything that one longs for, dreams of, expects and hopes for. He had filled her life with happiness from beginning to end. She could not have been happier.

Now I was going to see her again, for the second time, filled with the surprise and the vague contempt with which she inspired me.

She lived near the Hyères road, on the opposite slope of the mountain on which stands the Charreuse de la Verne; and another carriage was awaiting me on this road, for the deep track we had followed had now ceased and become a mere footpath, only accessible to pedestrians and mules.

I started, therefore, alone, on foot, and with slow steps to climb the mountains. I was in a delightful wood, a real Corsican thicket, a fairy-tale wood composed of flowering creepers, aromatic plants with a powerful fragrance, and huge, magnificent trees.

The granite fragments in the path sparkled as they rolled beneath my steps, and in the openings between the branches I saw sudden peeps of wide,

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gloomy valleys full of verdure, winding lengthily away to the distance.

I was warm. The quick blood flowed within my flesh. I felt it coursing through my veins, burning, rapid, alert, rhythmical and alluring as a song; the great, joyous animal song of life that breathes and moves in the sunlight. I was happy, I was strong. I quickened my pace, climbed the rocks, ran, jumped, and discovered every minute a larger view, a more gigantic network of desert valleys, from whence not one single chimney sent up a wreath of smoke.

I climbed to the summit, overtopped by other heights, and after walking in various directions I saw on the side of the mountain opposite me, beyond an immense chestnut wood, a black ruin, a mass of stones and old buildings supported by lofty arcades. To reach it I had to go round a ravine and cross the wood. The trees, old as the abbey itself, enormous, mutilated, and dying, had survived the building. Some have fallen, no longer able to sustain the weight of years; others, beheaded, have now only a hollow trunk in which ten men could conceal themselves. And they look like a formidable army of giants, who, in spite of age and thunderbolts, are ready still to attempt the assault of the skies. In this fantastic wood one feels the moldy touch of centuries, the old, old life of the rotting roots, amid which, at the feet of these colossal stumps, nothing can grow. For among the gray trunks the ground is of hard stones, and a blade of grass is rare.

Here are two covered springs or fountains, kept as drinking places for the cows.

I approach the abbey, and discover all the old

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buildings, the most ancient of which date back to the twelfth century; while the more recent are inhabited by a family of cowherds.

In the first court one sees by the tracks of animals that a remnant of life still haunts the spot; then, after traversing crumbling and tumbling halls, like those of all ruins, one reaches the cloister, a long covered walk around a square of brambles and tall grasses. In no spot in the world have I felt such a weight of melancholy press upon my heart as in this ancient and sinister cloister, the pacing court of monks. Certainly the forms of the arcades and the proportions of the place contribute to my emotion, to my heartache, and sadden my soul by their action on my eyes, exactly as the happy curve of some cheering bit of architecture would rejoice them. The man who built this retreat must have been filled with despair to imagine such a desolate, dreary promenade. One would fain weep and groan within these walls; one longs to suffer, to reopen all the wounds of one's heart, to enlarge and make the very utmost of all the sorrows compressed within it.

I climbed upon a breach in the wall, to see the view outside, and I understood my emotion. Nothing around us but death. Behind the abbey, a mountain ascending to the sky, around it the chestnut grove, in front of it, a valley, and beyond that more valleys—and pines, pines, an ocean of pines, and on the far horizon pines still, on the mountain tops.

And I left the place.

I crossed next a wood of cork trees, where, a year ago, I had experienced a shock of strong and moving surprise.

It was a gray October day, at the time when they

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strip the bark of these trees, to make corks of it. They strip them thus from the foot to the first branches, and the denuded trunk becomes red, a blood red, as of a flayed limb. They have grotesque and twisted forms and look like maimed creatures writhing in epileptic fits, and I suddenly fancied myself transported into a forest of tormented beings, a bleeding and Dantesque forest of hell, where men had roots, where bodies deformed by torture resembled trees, where life ebbed incessantly, in never-ending torment, through these bleeding wounds, which produced upon me that weakness of the nerves and faintness that always affect me at the sudden sight of blood or the unexpected shock of a man crushed or fallen from a roof. And this emotion was so keen, this sensation so vivid, that I imagined I heard distracting cries and moans, distant and innumerable. I touched one of these trees, to reassure my fainting spirit, and I fancied I beheld my hand, as I drew it back, covered with blood.

To-day they are cured—till the next barking.

At length I perceive the road that passes near the farm which has sheltered the long happiness of the non-commissioned officer of hussars and the colonel's daughter.

From afar I recognize the old man walking among the vines. So much the better; the wife will be alone in the house.

The servant was washing, in front of the door.

"Your mistress is here?" I said.

She replied, with a singular look, in the accent of the South:

"No, sir; it is six months since she is no more."

"She is dead?"

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"Yes, sir."

"And of what?"

The woman hesitated, then muttered:

"She is dead—dead, I tell you."

"But of what?"

"Of a fall, then!"

"A fall! Where from?"

"From the window."

I gave her a few sous.

"Tell me about it," I said.

No doubt she was very eager to talk of it; no doubt, too, she had often repeated the story for the last six months, for she told it at great length, like a well-known and unvarying tale.

Then I learned that for thirty years the old, deaf man had had a mistress in the neighboring village, and that his wife, having learned this by chance from a passing carter who spoke of it without knowing who she was, rushed breathless and distracted to the attic, and there hurled herself from the window; not, perhaps, with deliberate purpose, but beside herself with grief at her discovery, which goaded her forward irresistibly, like a whip lashing and cutting. She had flown up the staircase, burst open the door, and without knowing, without being able to stop her headlong speed, had continued to run straight ahead and had leaped into empty space.

He had known nothing of it; he did not know even now; he would never know, because he was deaf. His wife was dead, that was all. All the world must die some time or other!

I could see him at a distance, giving orders by signs to his laborers.

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Then I caught sight of the carriage which was waiting for me in the shade of a tree, and I returned to Saint-Tropez.

CHAPTER VII

April 14th.

I was going to bed last evening, although it was only nine o'clock, when a telegram was handed to me. One of my dearest friends sent me this message: "I am at Monte Carlo for four days, and have been telegraphing to you to every port on the coast. Come to me at once."

And behold, the wish to see him, the longing to talk, to laugh, to gossip about society, about things, about people; the longing to slander, to criticise, to blame, to judge, to chatter, was alight within me in a moment, like a conflagration. That very morning, even, I should have been furious at this recall, yet in the evening I was enchanted at it. I wished myself already there, with the great dining-room of the restaurant full of people before my eyes, and in my ears that murmur of voices in which the numbers of the roulette table dominate all other phrases like the *Dominus vobiscum* of the church services.

I called Bernard.

"We shall start at about four o'clock in the morning for Monaco," I said to him.

He replied philosophically:

"If it is fine, sir."

"It *will* be fine."

"The barometer is going down, though."

"Pooh! it will go up again."

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The mariner smiled an incredulous smile.

I went to bed and to sleep.

It was I who woke the men. It was dark and a few clouds hid the sky. The barometer had gone down still more.

The two men shook their heads with a distrustful air.

I repeated:

"Pooh! It will be fine. Come, let us be off!"

Bernard said:

"When I can see the open, I know what I am about; but here in this harbor, at the end of this gulf, one knows nothing, sir; one can see nothing. There might be a fearful sea on without our knowing anything about it."

I replied:

"The barometer has gone down, therefore we shall not have an east wind. Now, if we have a west wind, we can put into Agay, which is only six or seven miles off." The men did not seem much reassured; however, they got ready to start.

"Shall we take the dingey on deck?" asked Bernard.

"No; you will see it will be quite fine. Let it tow astern, as usual."

A quarter of an hour later we had left the harbor and were running through the entrance of the gulf, driven along by a light, intermittent breeze.

I laughed.

"Well, you see the weather is good enough."

Soon we had passed the black and white tower built upon the Rabiou shoal, and although sheltered by Cape Camarat, which runs far out into the open sea, and of which the flashing light appeared from

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minute to minute, the *Bel-Ami* was already lifted forward by long, powerful, slow waves; those hills of water which move on, one behind the other, without noise, without shock, without foam, menacing without fury, alarming in their very tranquillity.

One saw nothing, one only felt the rising and falling of the yacht on the dark, moving waters.

Bernard said:

"There has been a gale out at sea to-night, sir; we shall be lucky if we get in without accident."

The day broke clear above the restless mass of waves, and we all three looked anxiously seaward to see if the squall were not increasing.

All this time the boat was flying along with the wind and the tide. Already Agay appeared on our beam, and we held counsel whether we should make for Cannes, to escape the rough weather, or for Nice, running to seaward of the isles.

Bernard would have preferred Cannes, but as the breeze did not freshen, I decided in favor of Nice.

For three hours all went well, though the poor little yacht rolled like a cork in the frightful swell.

No one unacquainted with the open sea, that sea of mountains rolling along swiftly and heavily, separated by valleys which change place from second to second, filling up and forming again incessantly, can guess, can imagine the mysterious, redoubtable, terrifying and superb force of the waves.

Our little dingey followed far behind us, at the end of forty yards of hawser, through this liquid and tossing chaos. We lost sight of it every moment, then suddenly it would reappear, perched on the summit of a wave, floating along like a great white bird.

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Here is Cannes in the depth of its bay, Saint-Honorat with its tower standing up among the waves, and before us the Cap d'Antibes.

The breeze freshened little by little and the crests of the waves became flocks of sheep, those snowy sheep which move so fast, and of which the countless troop careers along without dog or shepherd beneath the endless sky.

Bernard said to me:

"It will be all we can do to make Antibes."

And, indeed, seas began to break over us with inexpressible and violent noise. Sharp squalls struck us, throwing us into yawning gulfs, whence we emerged, righting ourselves with terrible shocks.

The gaff was lowered, but at every vibration of the yacht the boom touched the waves and seemed ready to tear away the mast, which, if it should fly away with the sail, would leave us floating alone and lost upon the wild waves.

Bernard cried out:

"The dingey, sir!"

I turned to look. A huge wave filled it, rolled it over, enveloped it in foam as if it would devour it, and, breaking the hawser by which it was made fast to us, took possession of it, half sinking, drowned; a conquered prey which it will presently throw upon the rocks down there below the headland.

The minutes seem hours. Nothing can be done. We must go on, round the point in front of us, and when we have done that we shall be sheltered and in safety.

At last we reach it. The sea is now calm and smooth, protected as it is by the long tongue of rocks and earth which forms the Cape of Antibes.

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There is the harbor from which we started only a few days ago, although it seems to me we have been voyaging for months, and we enter just as noon is striking.

The men are radiant on finding themselves back again, though Bernard repeats at every other moment:

"Ah, sir, our poor little boat! It went to my heart to see it go down like that!"

As for me, I took the four o'clock train to go and dine with my friend in the principality of Monaco.

I wish I had time to write at length about this remarkable state, smaller than many a village in France, but wherein one may find an absolute sovereign, bishops, an army of Jesuits and *seminarists* more numerous than the army of the ruler, an artillery the guns of which are nearly all rifled, an etiquette more ceremonious than that of his lamented majesty Louis XIV., a royal prerogative more despotic than that of William of Prussia, joined to a magnificent toleration for the vices of humanity, on which, indeed, sovereign, bishops, Jesuits, *seminarists*, ministers, army, magistrates, every one, in short, exists.

Hail to this great pacific monarch, who, without fear of invasion or revolution, reigns peacefully over his happy little flock of subjects, in the midst of court ceremonies which preserve intact the traditions of the four curtsies, the twenty-six hand-kissings and all the forms in use once upon a time at the court of great rulers.

This monarch, moreover, is neither sanguinary nor vindictive, and when he banishes any one, as he

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does sometimes, the measure is put in force with the utmost delicacy.

Is a proof needful?

A persistent player, on a day of ill luck, insulted the sovereign. A decree was issued for his expulsion.

During a whole month he prowled around the forbidden paradise, fearing the sword blade of the archangel in the guise of the sabre of the policeman. One day, however, he hardened his heart, crossed the frontier, reached the very centre of the kingdom in thirty seconds and penetrated into the precincts of the Casino. But suddenly an official stopped him.

"Are you not banished, sir?"

"Yes, sir; but I leave by the next train."

"Oh, in that case it is all right. You can go in."

And every week he came back, and each time the same functionary asked him the same question, to which he invariably gave the same answer.

Could justice be more gentle?

Within the last few years, however, a very serious and novel case occurred within the kingdom.

This was an assassination.

A man, a native of Monaco, not one of the wandering strangers of whom one meets legions on these shores—a husband, in a moment of anger, killed his wife, killed her without rhyme or reason, without any excuse that could be accepted.

Indignation was unanimous throughout the principality.

The supreme court met to judge this exceptional case—a murder had never taken place before—and the wretch was, with one voice, condemned to death.

The indignant sovereign ratified the sentence.

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There only remained to execute the criminal. Then arose a difficulty. The country possessed neither guillotine nor executioner.

What was to be done? By the advice of the Minister of Foreign Affairs the prince opened negotiations with France to obtain the loan of a headsman and his apparatus.

Long deliberations took place in the ministry at Paris. At last they replied by sending an estimate of the cost of moving the woodwork and the practitioner. The whole amounted to sixteen thousand francs.

The monarch of Monaco reflected that the operation would cost him dear; the assassin was certainly not worth that price. Sixteen thousand francs for the head of a wretch like that? Never!

The same request was addressed to the Italian Government. A king and a brother would, no doubt, show himself less exacting than a republic.

The Italian Government sent in a bill which amounted to twelve thousand francs.

Twelve thousand francs! It would be necessary to impose a new tax, a tax of two francs a head! This would be enough to cause serious and hitherto unknown trouble in the state.

Then they bethought them of having the villain beheaded by a simple soldier. But the general, on being consulted, replied hesitatingly that perhaps his men had scarcely sufficient practice to acquit themselves satisfactorily of a task which undoubtedly demanded great experience in the handling of the sword.

Then the prince again assembled the supreme court and submitted to it this embarrassing case.

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They deliberated long, without finding any practical way out of the difficulty. At last the first president proposed to commute the sentence of death to that of lifelong imprisonment, and the measure was adopted.

But they did not own a prison. It was necessary to fit one up, and a jailer was appointed who took charge of the prisoner.

For six months all went well. The captive slept all day on a straw mattress in the nook arranged for him, and his guardian lazily reclined upon a chair before the door, while he watched the passersby.

The prince, however, is economical—extravagance is not his greatest fault—and he has accurate accounts laid before him of the smallest expenses of his state—the list of them is not a long one. They handed him, therefore, the bill of expenses incurred in the creation of this new function, the cost of the prison, the prisoner and the watchman. The salary of this last was a heavy burden on the budget of the sovereign.

At first he merely made a wry face over it, but when he reflected that this might go on forever—the prisoner was young—he requested his Minister of Justice to take measures to suppress the expense.

The minister consulted the President of the Tribunal, and the two agreed to suppress the expense of a jailer. The prisoner, thus invited to guard himself, could not fail to escape, which would solve the question to the satisfaction of all parties.

The jailer was therefore restored to his family, and it became the duty of a scullion from the palace kitchen to carry to the prisoner his morning and

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evening meals. But the captive made no attempt to recover his liberty.

Finally one day, as they had neglected to furnish him with food, they beheld him tranquilly appear at the palace to claim it; and from that day forward it became his habit to come at meal times to the palace, to eat with the servants, whose friend he became, and to thus save the cook the trouble of the walk to and fro.

After breakfast he would take a turn as far as Monte Carlo. He sometimes went into the Casino to venture a five-franc piece on the green cloth. When he had won, he gave himself a good dinner at one of the most fashionable hotels; then he returned to his prison, carefully locking his door on the inside.

He never slept away a single night.

The situation became a little puzzling, not for the convict, but for the judges.

The court assembled afresh, and it was decided that they should invite the criminal to leave the State of Monaco.

When this decision was announced to him he simply replied:

"You are pleased to be facetious. Well, and what would become of me in that case? I have no longer any means of subsistence. I have no longer a family. What would you have me do? I was condemned to death. You did not choose to execute me. I made no complaint. I was afterward condemned to imprisonment for life and placed in the hands of a jailer. You took away my guardian. Again I made no complaint.

"Now, to-day, you want to turn me out of the

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country. Not if I know it. I am a prisoner, your prisoner, judged and condemned by you. I am faithfully fulfilling my sentence. I remain here."

The supreme court was nonplussed. The prince was in a terrible rage and ordered fresh measures to be taken.

Deliberations were resumed.

Then, at last, they decided to offer the culprit a pension of six hundred francs if he would leave the state and live elsewhere.

He accepted.

He has rented a little plot five minutes' walk from the kingdom of his former sovereign and lives happily upon his property, cultivating a few vegetables and despising all potentates.

However, the court of Monaco has profited, though a little late, by this experience, and has made a treaty with the French Government by which they send their convicts over to France, who keeps them out of sight in consideration of a modest compensation.

In the judicial archives of the principality one is shown the decree which settles the pension by which the rascal was induced to leave the State of Monaco.

Opposite the palace rises the rival establishment, the Roulette. There is, however, no hatred, no hostility between them, for the latter supports the former, which in return protects it. Admirable example; unique instance of two neighboring and powerful families living in peace in one tiny state, an example well calculated to efface the remembrance of the Capulets and the Montagues. Here the house of the sovereign, there the gambling house, the old

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and the new society fraternizing to the sound of gold.

The halls of the Casino are as freely open to strangers as those of the prince are difficult of access.

I turn to the first.

A noise of money, continuous as that of the waves—a noise at once deep, light and terrible—fills the ears from the moment one enters, then fills the soul, stirs the heart, troubles the mind and bewilders thought. Everywhere this sound, this singing, crying, calling, tempting, rending sound.

Around the tables a motley crowd of players, the scum of every continent and of every society, mixed with princes or future kings, women of fashion, *bourgeois*, money lenders, disreputable women; a mixture, unique in the world, of men of all races, of all castes, of all kinds, of every origin; a perfect museum of adventurers from Russia, Brazil, Chili, Italy, Spain, Germany; of old women with reticules, of disreputable young ones carrying on their wrist little purses containing keys, a handkerchief and the three last five-franc pieces which are kept for the green cloth when the vein of luck shall chance to return.

I approached the first table and saw a pale face, with lined forehead and hard-set lips, features contracted and with a bad expression—the young woman of Agay Bay, the beautiful sweetheart of the sunny wood and the moonlit bay. He, too, is there, seated before her, his hand resting on a few napoleons.

“Play on the first square,” said she.

He inquired anxiously:

“All?”

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"Yes, all."

He placed the coins in a little heap.

The croupier turned the wheel. The ball ran, danced and stopped.

"Nothing further counts," jerks forth the voice, which resumes after a moment:

"Twenty-eight."

The young woman started and in a hard, sharp tone said:

"Come away."

He rose, and, without looking at her, followed her; and one felt that some dreadful thing had sprung up between them.

Some one remarked:

"Good-by to love. They don't look as if they were of one mind to-day."

A hand taps me on the shoulder. I turn round. It is my friend.

I have now only to ask pardon for having thus trespassed on my reader by talking so much of myself. I had written this journal of day dreams entirely for myself, or, rather, I had taken advantage of my floating solitude to capture the wandering ideas which are wont to traverse our minds, like birds on the wing.

But I am asked to publish these few pages, which, unconnected, deficient in composition and in art, follow one after the other without a reason and abruptly conclude without a motive, simply because a squall of wind put an end to my voyage.

I have yielded to this request. Perhaps I am wrong.

LA VIE ERRANTE;

OR, THE WANDERING LIFE

CHAPTER I

WEARINESS

I LEFT Paris, and France, too, on account of the Eiffel Tower.

It could not only be seen from everywhere, but it could be found everywhere, made of every kind of known material, exhibited in all windows, an ever-present and racking nightmare.

It was not only the thing itself, however, that created in me an irresistible desire to be alone for a while, but all that has been built up around it, within it, above it and in its neighborhood.

How can the newspapers have dared to speak of "new architecture" and refer to this metallic skeleton? Architecture, to-day the least understood and most forgotten of all the arts, is, perhaps, also the most esthetic, mysterious and richest in ideas of them all.

Throughout the ages, it has had the privilege of symbolizing, so to speak, each epoch; to represent, by means of a very small number of typical monuments, the manner of thinking, feeling and dreaming of a race and a civilization.

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A few temples and churches, palaces and castles contain almost all the history of art in this world, conveying to our eyes better than books, by the harmony of their lines and the charm of their ornamentation, all the beauty and grandeur of an epoch.

I should like to know what will be thought of our generation, if some riot does not soon make this high and lanky pyramid of iron ladders crumble—that ugly, gigantic skeleton whose base seems to have been constructed to support a formidable monument of Cyclops, only to taper into a ridiculously thin profile like that of a factory chimney.

It is a problem that has been solved, people say. That is granted—although it might be said the whole discussion was of no use, but then I prefer the old idea of the ancient architects, of making again the naïve attempt of the Tower of Babel, just as those of the Campanile of Pisa did in the twelfth century.

The idea of constructing this graceful tower of eight stories of marble columns, tilting a little, as if it were about to fall sidewise, of proving to stupefied posterity that the centre of gravity is nothing but a useless creation of certain engineers, and that monuments can be built without bothering about it, and still be charming and attract more surprised visitors, after seven centuries' existence, than the Eiffel Tower will in seven months—constitutes a problem (since problem there must be) which is more original than that of that gigantic piece of ironware smeared with paint, only fit to please the eye of an Indian.

Yes, I know that another version of the story is that the Campanile bent over of its own accord

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Who knows? The pretty edifice keeps its secret, still discussed and still unsolved.

But what do I care about the Eiffel Tower? It was only the lighthouse of an international Kermess, according to the consecrated expression, the remembrance of which will haunt me like a nightmare.

Far be it from my mind to criticise this great political enterprise, the World's Fair, that showed the universe, just at the right moment, the strength, vitality, activity and inexhaustible richness of this surprising country—France.

Great pleasure, great amusement, as well as a great example were given to the people and the middle classes. They were highly satisfied and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content.

But I merely decided from the very first that I was not made to appreciate such pleasures.

After visiting, with a sense of profound admiration, the section devoted to the display of machinery, the weird discoveries of science, mechanics, physics and modern chemistry; after satisfying myself that the Arabian dances are charming only when performed in their original setting, I remarked to myself that the fair would be an interesting place to go to once in a while, provided one could rest from the fatigue of it all at one's own home or at some friend's house.

But I never had had any idea of what Paris could become when invaded by the universe.

From early dawn the crowded streets resemble swollen currents. Every one is going to or coming back from the exposition or returning thither. In the street carriages in a long line give one the im-

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pression of an endless train. Not one is free, and there is not a coachman who will drive you to another place than the fair or to his stable when he goes to change horses. Not a cab at the clubs. They are all working for the strangers; not a table at the restaurants and not a friend who dines at home or who will consent to dine at your house.

When you invite him, he accepts on condition that the dinner shall take place on the Eiffel Tower. It's more jolly! And they all, as if it were the password, invite you there every day of the week, either to have luncheon or dinner.

In this heat, dust, stench, perspiring crowd, amid greasy bits of flying paper, the odor of delicatessen and spilled wine, the breaths of three hundred thousand mouths, in the contact and friction with this overheated mass of flesh, this mixed sweat of all these different races, sowing their fleas, as it were, on the benches and in all the alleys—I thought it natural that one might, through curiosity, once or twice, try the cooking of these aerial restaurants, but I thought it astonishing that any one could dine every evening amid this filth and crowd as did the members of good society of the dainty class, the *élite*, who ordinarily affect to be nauseated by the people who toil and emit the odor of physical fatigue.

This proves definitely that the triumph of democracy is complete.

There are no more castes, races or aristocratic epidermis. We have now only two classes, the rich and the poor. There is no other classification to distinguish the degrees of modern society.

An aristocracy of another order is establishing itself, whose triumph was unanimous at the exposi-

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tion, the aristocracy of science, or, rather, of scientific industry.

As for the arts, they are disappearing. The very instinct of art is dying out in the *élite* of the nation, who tolerated without protest the bristling ornamentation of the central dome and of some of the neighboring buildings.

The modern Italian taste is dominating us, and the contagion is such that the spots reserved for artists in this great, popular and *bourgeois* bazaar gave one the impression of an advertising show or a display pedlar's wares.

I should not protest against the reign of the scientists if the nature of their work and their discoveries did not constrain me to notice that they are, above all, commercial experimenters.

It is not their fault, perhaps. But it looks as if the course of human thought is dammed up between two walls, that can never be broken through: industry and commerce.

In the beginning of the many civilizations man's soul had recourse to art. One would think that a jealous divinity then said to him: "I forbid you to think of those things. Just concern yourself about your material life, like an animal, and I shall cause you to make a myriad of discoveries."

And, in fact, to-day the seductive and powerful emotion of the artistic centuries seems to be dead, while minds of another order are awakening to invent machines of all kinds, wonderful contrivances, mechanisms as complicated as the human body, or to combine substances and thereby obtain admirable and astonishing results. And all that to supply the physical wants of man or to kill him.

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Ideal conceptions, such as pure and disinterested science, the science of Galileo, Newton and Pascal, seem to be lacking, while our imagination appears more and more excited by the desire of making discoveries useful to our existence.

But does not the genius of the man who, with one mental bound deduced, from the fall of an apple, the great law that rules the whole universe seem born of a more divine germ than that of the sharp American inventor, the marvellous manufacturer of bells, megaphones and lightning apparatus?

Is not that the secret vice of the modern mind, the sign of its inferiority in its triumph?

I may be entirely wrong. At all events, these things which interest us to-day in a practical way do not enthuse us as do the ancient forms of thought, emotional slaves as we are, of a dream of delicate beauty that haunts and spoils our lives.

I felt that it would be very pleasant to revisit Florence, and immediately resolved to do so.

CHAPTER II

NIGHT

Leaving the port of Cannes at three o'clock in the morning, we could still feel the breezes wafted from the land during the night. Then a slight breeze came from the open and impelled our yacht in full sail toward the Italian coast.

It is a boat of twenty tons, painted white, with an imperceptible golden thread surrounding it like

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a girdle encircling a swan. Its sails of new canvas, beneath the rays of an August sun reflected in flames on the water, look like silvery, silken wings against the blue sky. The jibsails, light triangles, rounded out by a breath of wind, fly forward, and the mainsail is slack under its fifty-four-foot peak, which points upward like an arrow; the after-sail, the jigger of the boat, flaps in a sleepy way.

Soon every one is dozing on the deck. It is a typical summer afternoon on the Mediterranean Sea. The wind has died away; the fierce sun fills the sky and turns the sea into a soft bluish sheet, motionless and without a ripple, asleep, as it were, under a glittering mist that looks as though the water were sweating.

Notwithstanding the awnings which I had put up to protect me from the sun, the heat is so great that I am forced to go below and rest on a divan.

It is always cool inside. The yacht is of deep draught, built to navigate in northern seas and to resist rough weather. A crew and six passengers, or seven possibly, can live comfortably in this floating abode and eight can sit at dinner in the little dining-room.

The interior is finished in varnished pine, framed with teakwood, brightened by the brass of the locks, hinges and chandeliers, all the gay yellow brasses that belong to the luxury of yachts.

How strange this change after the clamor of Paris! I do not hear a sound now, not a sound. Every quarter of an hour, perhaps, the sailor at the helm, almost asleep, gives a slight cough, and the clock hanging on the wall makes a noise which

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sounds formidable in this silence of the heavens and the sea.

And this ticking of the clock, which alone disturbs the quiet of the elements, gives me the wonderful sensation of those boundless solitudes where the murmurs of the worlds, hushed at only a few yards above their surfaces, are imperceptible in the silence of the universe.

It seems as if something of this eternal calm of space comes down and spreads itself over the motionless sea on this stifling hot day. It is oppressive, soporific, annihilating, like the contact with the infinite vacuum. The will surrenders, thought stops and sleep takes hold of both body and soul.

Night was approaching when I awoke. A few breaths of twilight breeze, hardly hoped for, swept us along until the sun went down.

We were very near the coast, in sight of the city of San Remo, but there was no hope of reaching it that night. Other villages or small towns were spread at the foot of the high gray mountain and looked like packs of white linen put out to dry on the beach. A mist hung on the slopes of the Alps, hiding the valleys as they spread upward toward the mountain crests that formed an immense dentated line against a rose-and-lilac sky.

Night came upon us; the mountains disappeared, and fires were lighted on the water's edge all along the coast.

A delicious odor of cooking, coming from the interior of the yacht, mingled agreeably with the salt sea air.

After dinner I lay at full length on deck. This quiet day of drifting had wiped out all there was in

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my mind as a sponge clears a tarnished glass, and memories came crowding upon my thoughts, memories of the life I had left behind me, of people I knew well, had seen or loved.

Nothing makes the mind travel and the imagination run riot like being alone at sea, under the sky, on a hot night. I felt excited, vibrating in all my being, as if I had been drinking some heady wine, inhaling ether or were still in the embrace of a beloved one.

The nocturnal coolness moistened my skin in a sort of imperceptible bath of salt-water vapor. The slight shiver caused by the cooling air went through my limbs, entered my lungs, and body and soul were refreshed, almost beatified.

Are they happier or less happy, those who experience sensations through the entire surface of their skin as perfectly as they do through the medium of their eyes, mouth, nostrils or ears?

It is a rare and much-to-be-dreaded faculty, perhaps, this highly nervous and morbid excitability of the epidermis and of all the senses which converts the slightest physical impression into an emotion, making one feel sorrowful and joyful according to the changes of temperature, the odors emanating from the soil, the color of the daylight.

To be unable to enter a theatre because the contact with crowds affects in an inexplicable manner the entire organism; to be unable to go into a ball-room because the fictitious gaiety and the whirling motion of the waltzers irritate like an insult; to feel suddenly happy or melancholy, without any apparent reason, according to the decoration, the hangings or the combinations of light in a room, and to

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experience, through the combination of certain perceptions, an indefinable physical satisfaction which nothing can reveal to persons of a coarser grain—is it a happiness or a misfortune?

I do not know, but if the nervous system is not sensitive to a point which reaches pain or ecstasy, it can only give us very ordinary sensations and vulgar gratifications.

This sea mist was like a caress, filling me with happiness. It spread over the heavens, and I watched with delight the stars enveloped in gauze-like veils, looking somewhat paler in the dark firmament. The coast had now disappeared behind this vapor, which floated over the waters and put a halo round the stars.

One would have thought that some supernatural hand had packed the earth in fleecy clouds, as if about to send it to some unknown destination.

Suddenly, through this snowy shadow, a sound of distant music, from an unknown source, came over the sea. I thought some aerial orchestra was hovering in space to give me a concert. The faint but clear sounds, delightfully sonorous, came across the night in a murmur of opera.

A voice spoke beside me:

"Why," said the sailor, "it's Sunday, and there's music in the public park of San Remo."

I listened, so much surprised that I was afraid it was only a dream. I listened a long while, infinitely charmed, to the nocturnal music wafted by the breeze through space.

But now the sound swelled, became louder and seemed to rush toward us. It was so weird that I got up to listen. It was becoming more and more

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distinct, every sound, and was evidently approaching me; but how? Upon what phantom raft would it appear? It was coming nearer and nearer, but so rapidly that I peered into the darkness excitedly; and next, as if by magic, I was bathed in a hot breeze, redolent of aromatic plants, bearing as on a wave the strong perfume of myrtle, mint, citronella, immortelles, gum mastic, lavender and thyme scorched on the mountain by the summer sun.

It was the land breeze which was springing up, laden with the breath of the shore, and carrying out to sea, intermingled with the odor of the Alpine plants, those wonderful harmonious strains of music.

I remained breathless, intoxicated with such delightful sensations that my troubled senses seemed to be in a delirium. I really did not know whether I was breathing music, or hearing perfumes, or even sleeping up in the stars.

This perfumed breeze blew us out to sea, where it evaporated in the night. The sounds gradually died out as the ship moved on.

I could not sleep, and I wondered how a modern poet of the so-called symbolist school would have explained the confused nervous vibration which I had just experienced and which seems to me, to speak plainly, inexplicable. No doubt some of those poets who take such pains to give expression to the multifarious artistic sensitiveness of thought would have come out with honor, giving in euphonious rhymes, replete with intentional sonorousness, incomprehensible yet slightly perceptible, a fair description of this extraordinary blending of perfumed sounds, starry mist and sweet land breeze, sowing music in the night air.

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A sonnet from their patron, Baudelaire, came back to my mind:

Nature is a temple where living columns
Sometimes allow jumbled words to escape;
Man walks through a forest of symbols
That watch him with familiar looks.

Like long-drawn echoes mingling in the distance,
In a dark and deep unity
As vast as night, as vast as light,
Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other.

There are perfumes as sweet as a child's lips,
Sweet as a clarinet, green as the meadows,
—And others, again, strong and overpowering,
Having the breadth of infinite space,
Like ambergris, musk, benzoin, and incense,
Which exalt the enraptured mind and senses.

Had I not just felt the true meaning of this verse
to the very marrow of my bones:

Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other.

And not only do they answer each other in nature,
but within us, too, and lose themselves sometimes
“in dark and deep unity,” as the poet says, by the
repercussion of one sense on another.

Medical science is fully aware of this. Many
articles have been written on the subject under the
title of *Colored Audition*.

It has been proved that, in certain nervous and
high-strung natures, when one sense receives a shock
which affects it, the concussion of the impression is
communicated, in the same manner as the ripples
of a wave, to the other senses, each of which re-
sponds in its own peculiar way. Thus music in
certain beings evokes visions of the different colors
It must then be a kind of contagion of impressions
transformed according to the normal action of each
cerebral apparatus thus affected.

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In this way can be explained the famous sonnet by Arthur Rimbaud, which speaks of the colors of the vowels, an article of faith which has been adopted by the school of symbolism:

A, black; E, white; I, red; U, green; O, blue; vowels.

Is he right or wrong? As far as the man who breaks stones on the road, and many of our great men, too, are concerned, this poet is an impostor or a fool. But, in the mind of others, he has discovered and expressed an absolute truth, though these explorers of minute perceptions must always differ a little in their opinions on the colors and pictures that may be evoked in us by the mysterious vibrations of vowels or of an orchestra.

If it is recognized by the science of to-day that musical notes affecting certain organisms can arouse visions of colors; if *sol* can be red; *fa*, lilac or green, why could not these same sounds arouse tastes in the mouths and odors in the nostrils? Why should not fastidious though somewhat hysterical natures be affected by everything through the medium of every one of their senses at the same time, and why, too, could not the symbolist reveal a delightful sensitiveness to those of their own sort, incurable and privileged poets that they are? This is more a question of artistic pathology than of estheticism pure and simple.

Is it not possible, however, that some of those interesting writers—enthusiastic neuropaths—have reached such a degree of excitability that every impression received creates in them a concerted action of all the perceptive faculties?

And is that not the very thing which their strange

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poetry of sounds, apparently unintelligible, tries to express when it makes a melody of the whole gamut of sensations, and by the mere grouping of words seeks to obtain untranslatable meanings, clear enough to them, but obscure to us?

For artists have come to an end of their resources; nothing is unpublished, unknown in the field of emotion, of imagination, in any line. Since the beginning of time all the flowers of this particular field have been culled. And now it happens that, in their powerlessness to create, they feel in a confused and indefinite way that there may, some day, be a broadening of the soul and the senses. But the mind at present has five half-opened, padlocked gates, known as the five senses, and it is at these five gates that men enamored of the new art are tugging with all their might.

The mind, that blind and hard-working Unknown, can know, understand, discover nothing except through the senses. They are its only purveyors, its only agents between Universal Nature and itself. It works exclusively on the materials furnished by them, which they, in turn, can gather only in proportion to their own sensitiveness, strength and acuteness.

The value of the mind evidently depends directly upon the value of the senses, and its breadth is limited to their number.

Monsieur Taine, however, has masterfully studied and developed this idea.

There are five senses and only five. They reveal to us, by interpreting them, certain properties of surrounding matter, which contains hidden also an

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unlimited number of other phenomena that we are incapable of perceiving.

Suppose man had been created without ears; he would exist in much the same manner as now, except that to him the universe would be mute; he would have no conception of noise, of music, which are but transformed vibrations.

But suppose he had been given other organs, powerful and sensitive, gifted with the faculty of transforming into nerve perception the actions and attributes of all the inexplicable things that surround us—how much more varied would be the extent of our knowledge and emotions.

It is into this impenetrable domain that every artist attempts to enter by tormenting, violating and exhausting the mechanism of his mind. Those whose brains have given way—Heine, Baudelaire, Balzac, Byron, the vagabond, who sought death, disconsolate at the misfortune of being a great poet; Musset, De Goncourt, and so many others—were they not all shattered by this very effort to break down the material barrier that imprisons the human mind?

Yes, our senses are the nurses and the masters of artistic genius. The ear begets the musician and the eye gives birth to the painter. All senses coöperate to give the poet his sensations. With the novelist the sense of vision usually predominates. It does so to such an extent that it becomes easy to detect, on reading a sincere and well-written novel, the physical qualities and attributes of an author's glance. The magnifying of details, in their importance or minuteness, whether they encroach on the general scheme or not, goes to show all the degrees

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and differences of myopia. The coördination of the whole, the proportion of the lines and the preferred perspective to a certain minuteness of observation, the careless omission of some slight information which would be a clue to the characteristics of a person or a group—do not these indicate the far-seeing though careless glance of a far-sighted person?

CHAPTER III

THE ITALIAN COAST

The sky is veiled by clouds. The dawning day has a grayish tint, through the mists which spread like a wall, thicker in some places, between us and the rising sun.

A vague fear saddens us that until evening these clouds will keep nature mourning, as it were, and we are continually throwing impatient glances at the sky like a silent prayer.

But we can guess, by certain lightened spots which now and then divide the more opaque masses, that the sun is shining above these clouds and is illuminating the blue sky and their snowy surface. We wait and hope.

Little by little they become paler, thinner and seem to melt. One feels that the sun is burning them, gnawing them and even crushing them with all its ardor; that the immense ceiling of clouds is too weak to resist, and that it must break and part under the great weight of glaring light.

A small spot lightens up in the midst and a faint

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glimmer is seen. A breach is made, through which glistens the sunshine, spreading as it falls. It looks as if this little hole were on fire. It is like a mouth opening wider and wider, all ablaze, with flaming lips, pouring on the waves a cascade of golden light.

Then, simultaneously in a thousand places, the shadowy arch breaks and goes to pieces, allowing a hundred arrows to rain down on the water through its wounds, thus scattering over the horizon the full joyousness of the radiant sun.

The air has freshened through the night; a quiver of wind caresses the sea, hardly causing a ripple, with so slight a tickling of its blue, silky surface. In front of us, on a high, rocky peak, which seems to rise out of the sea and lean upon the hills, nestles a little town, painted rose color by the hand of man, as the horizon is by the victorious dawn. A few blue houses, here and there, make charming blue dots, as it were. It looks like the abode of a princess of the *Arabian Nights*. It is Port-Maurice.

When one has seen it thus one ought not to land there. I did, however.

It has the appearance of a ruin. Its houses, strewn like crumbs along both sides of the streets. All one side of the city which has fallen down, probably during an earthquake, toward the shore, has ledges from top to bottom of the hill, on which are roofless, dismantled dwellings, old houses of plaster, through which the wind blows. And the tinting, so pretty from a distance where it harmonized with the rising sun, on closer view shows a woefully faded, smeared effect, tarnished by the sun and washed out by the rain.

Throughout the streets, tortuously winding corri-

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dors full of stones and dust, floats a nameless odor, so penetrating, so strong, so tenacious that I hurried back to the yacht, my eyes full of dust, my stomach upset.

Yet it is one of the principal towns of that province. To one first setting foot in this part of Italy it looks like a flag of misery.

Facing it, on the other side of the gulf, is Oneglia, a very filthy and ill-smelling town, though it is less wretched look and more lively.

Under the large portals of the Royal College, which stand wide open during the vacation, an old woman sits mending a filthy mattress.

We enter the harbor of Savona. A large group of manufactories or foundries, whose chimneys are fed every day by the coal brought here by four or five English steamers, emit through their giant openings volumes of curling smoke that fall back on the city in a shower of soot, blown here and there by the wind, like snow from Hades, as it were.

Never go into that harbor, sailors of small sailing vessels, if you wish to keep your pretty white sails clean.

Savona is charming, though a typical Italian town. Its narrow streets are full of bustling merchants, with fruit spread on the ground, ripe, red tomatoes, black or yellow grapes, transparent, as if filled with light; green lettuce, its leaves stripped in a hurry and scattered over the ground, giving one the impression of an invasion of the city by vegetable gardens.

After returning to the yacht I saw along the wharf, on an immense table which filled the deck of

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a Neapolitan boat, a startling sight—something strange that looked like a murderers' banquet.

Bleeding, murderously red, as it were, giving the boat a color and air of a butchery, a massacre, of torn flesh even, were spread out in front of thirty swarthy sailors sixty or perhaps a hundred quarters of the blood-red watermelons.

It looked as if these men were burying their teeth in raw flesh, as do captured wild animals in their cages. It was a feast. The crew of a near-by ship has been invited. Every one is happy. The red caps on their heads are not half so vivid in color as the heart of the fruit.

When night had fallen upon us I went back to the town.

The sound of music attracted me to the other side of the town. I struck an avenue where groups of *bourgeois* and common people were walking leisurely toward the evening concert, given two or three times a week by the municipal band.

These orchestras in this musical country are equal, even in the smaller towns, to those of our best theatres. I recalled the one I had heard on the deck of my yacht one night, the memory of which remained as one of the sweetest sensations I ever experienced.

This avenue ended in a square almost on the beach, and there, in the semi-darkness, relieved by only a few yellow gaslights, the orchestra played, I do not quite remember what pieces, close to the water's edge.

The waves rolled heavily along the beach with their monotonously regulated rhythm, which seemed to accompany the lively music of the instruments. The violet sky, filled with a golden dust of stars

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which gave it an almost violet gleam, blended slowly into the shadows of night and fell on the silent crowd, hardly to be heard whispering, as some walked around the enclosure for the musicians, sat on benches in the promenade, on lonely rocks on the beach or on large beams to be used to finish the construction of the framework of the big ship beside them.

I cannot say whether the women of Savona are beautiful, but I do know that they are charming as they go bareheaded at night, each carrying a fan. It was fascinating, this noiseless beating of imprisoned wings, white, black or spotted, all fluttering like large moths held between the fingers. Each woman, whether resting or walking, carried a fan and this vague effort of the leaves, as it were, to escape, while they seemingly made the air cooler, gave a feminine, coquettish something which was most agreeable to a man.

Presently, in the midst of the waving fans and uncovered heads all about me, I began to fancy myself in fairyland, as I was wont to do when a mere boy at boarding school in the cold dormitory at night, when, before dropping off to sleep, I mused on the contents of a novel secretly devoured under the cover of my desk. Sometimes, too, deep in my worn heart, poisoned with incredulity, there is an awakening, for a few instants, of the simple innocence of my boyish heart.

One of the most beautiful things that can be seen in this world is Genoa viewed from the sea.

At the head of the bay the city rises as if from

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out of the water. On both sides, which make a curve around Genoa, as if to protect and caress it, fifteen small towns, neighbors, vassals, servants, reflect and bathe their light-colored houses in the waters. To the left are Cogoleto, Arenzano, Voltri, Pra, Pegli, Sestri-Ponente and San Pier d'Arena; to the right Sturla, Quarto, Quinto, Nervi, Bogliasco, Sori, Recco, Camogli, the last white spot on the cape of Porto-Fino, which closes the gulf on the southeast.

Genoa rises above her immense harbor on the first hill of the Alps, which stand out behind it like a giant wall. On the jetty is a small square tower, a lighthouse, called "The Lantern," which looks like a gigantic candle.

We pass into the outer port, an enormous basin, well sheltered, where innumerable tugboats steam about, looking for customers; then, after rounding the eastern jetty, we enter the port itself, crowded with ships, those ships of the south and the Orient, with their delightful coloring, the triangular, one-masted ships, painted and rigged in the most fantastic manner, carrying on their prows blue or gilt Madonnas or even strange-looking animals, which are regarded as sacred protectors.

This fleet, with its good Virgins and talismans, is lined up along the wharves, their pointed and uneven bows turned toward the centre of the basin. Then come the powerful steamers, situated according to the company to which they belong, narrow and high, with colossal outlines. There are also, in the midst of these sea pilgrims, brigs and three-masted ships, clothed, like the Arabs, in dazzling white, across which the sunlight glides.

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If there is nothing prettier than the entrance to the port of Genoa, equally there is nothing uglier than the entrance to the city. The wharf is a swamp of rubbish and the narrow streets are enclosed like tortuous corridors between two winding rows of very tall houses, from which emanate pestilential and sickening odors.

One feels in Genoa as in Florence, still more so in Venice, that these once aristocratic cities have fallen into the hands of the people.

Here is recalled the memory of those fierce men who fought or transacted business on the seas, who then, with the money thus obtained or from conquests or barterings had those astonishing palaces built which still line the principal streets. When we enter these magnificent residences, odiously daubed by the descendants of those great citizens of the haughtiest of all republics; when we compare the style, the courts, the gardens, the porticos, the interior galleries and all the decorative and gorgeous appointments, with the barbaric wealth of the finest mansions of modern Paris, with the palaces of millionaires who only know how to handle money, who are utterly incapable of conceiving, desiring or creating something new and beautiful at the same time—we understand, then, that the real supremacy of the intelligence, the meaning of the rare beauty of form, the perfection of proportions and lines have disappeared from our democratic society, composed now of rich financiers without taste and parvenus without traditions.

It is even an interesting thing to observe the hackneyed and commonplace atmosphere of the modern hotels. Enter the old palaces of Genoa and you

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will see a series of courtyards with galleries and columns, marble staircases of marvellous beauty, all of which were designed and executed by true artists for men of cultivated taste.

Enter the old châteaux of France, and you will notice the same tendency toward a new and original ornamentation.

Then enter any one of the wealthiest homes of Paris at the present time and you will admire curious ancient objects, carefully catalogued, labelled and exhibited in glass cases, according to their known value, vouched for by experts, but in no instance will you be struck by anything original and new in the different parts of the mansion itself.

The architect is supposed to construct a beautiful house, costing several millions, of which he is to receive a certain percentage, according to the amount of work he puts upon it.

The upholsterer, for a given remuneration, takes charge of the interior decoration. As the gentlemen of this industry are not unaware of their clients' lack of artistic knowledge, and as they would not dare suggest anything new to them, they are perfectly satisfied to repeat what they have already done for others.

After one has visited, in Genoa, these ancient palaces and admired a few paintings, especially the three masterpieces of Van Dyck, there is nothing more to see except the Campo-Santo, which is a modern cemetery, an extraordinary museum of funeral structures, the most wonderful, the most dismal, the most comical in all the world. All along the four sides of an immense gallery, in a giant cloister, opening on a yard paved with the flat white

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gravestones of the poor, one passes a series of statues of tradesmen mourning their dead.

What an extraordinary, mysterious idea! The work, in its polished execution, in the chiseling of these figures, bespeaks a remarkable technique and a highly artistic talent. The material of the robes, of the waistcoats and trousers is depicted in a most realistic manner. I saw a figure wearing a *moiré* silk gown, the reproduction of which, with its folds and creases, was indescribably realistic; and yet, in my opinion, nothing is so ridiculously grotesque, ignominiously commonplace as the method of people who thus mourn their beloved ones.

Whose is the fault? The sculptor is the one to blame, as he saw only what was commonplace in the physiognomy of the modern tradesman, and it is no wonder, for they can no longer distinguish the divine spark which the Flemish artists had so well seized and which they reproduced when they depicted even the most ordinary and sometimes the ugliest types of their race. It may be that the *bourgeois* himself is to blame, he who has been tossed about by this low, democratic civilization like a pebble on the beach, whose distinctive characteristics have been worn away, and who has lost, in this constant friction, the last marks that remained of the originality with which all social classes were endowed by nature.

The Genoese are very proud of this astonishing museum, which only bewilders the observer's mind.

From the port of Genoa to the point of Porto-Fino is a series of towns, a scattering of houses on

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the beach, between the light blue of the sea and the brilliant green of the mountain. A breeze from the southeast compels us to tack. It is not strong, though its sudden gusts make the yacht keel a little to one side or dart suddenly ahead, like a runaway horse, and both sides are adorned with streaks of white foam. Then the wind abates, the boat regains its quiet pace, now gliding nearer the shore, now farther from it. About two o'clock the captain surveys the horizon with his glass to make out, according to the quantity of sails and the tacking of the other vessels, the direction and strength of the wind, which, in these parts, sweeps with great suddenness across the water or comes in gentle zephyrs, as capricious as the moods of a pretty woman.

"We'll have to take in sail, sir," he announces; "the two schooners ahead of us have just hauled down their topsails. Heavy winds over there."

The order was given and the inflated canvas slid down from the top of the mast, flapping limply and palpitating somewhat as a bird that has just been shot.

There were no waves. A few ripples foamed a little here and there, but suddenly in the distance I saw the water was white as if some one had thrown a sheet over it. It was coming, approaching rapidly, and when this white line was a few yards away from us the sails of the yacht sustained a violent, abrupt shock from the wind that seemed to gallop over the sea, scattering the flying spray, which resembled feathers plucked from the breast of a swan. All this foam torn from the waters, this thin layer of flying froth flew about and was scattered by the invisible whistling attack of the squall. With our

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vessel lying on its side, almost submerged by the water which dashed noisily against the deck, with weather shrouds taut, with masts and spars creaking, we sped along at a furious pace, speed-mad, as it were. It really is a unique sensation, this excitement of holding between your hands, with muscles strained from head to foot, the iron bar that guides through the storm this wild yet inert animal made of canvas and wood.

This fury of the air lasted only three-quarters of an hour. Then suddenly, when the Mediterranean had resumed its beautiful blue tint, it seemed to me that the wrath of the sky was appeased, so calm became the atmosphere. It was a fit of passion that had passed away, the end of a rough morning; and the joyous laugh of the sun again spread across space.

We were just approaching the cape, where I perceived at its extreme point, at the foot of a steep rock, a church and three houses. Who on earth could live there? What can the people do? How can they communicate with other living beings except through one of the little canoes pulled up on the narrow beach?

Now we have doubled the cape. The line of the coast is uninterrupted until Porto-Venera is reached, at the entrance of the Gulf of Spezzia. All this region is incomparably fascinating.

In a wide, deep bay opening before us we can see Santa-Margherita, then Rapallo and Chiavari and farther away Sestri-Servante.

The yacht, having tacked about, glided along only two cable lengths from the rocks, and at the end of the cape, which we had just rounded, we discovered

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suddenly a gorge where the sea enters, a gorge hidden away, barely seen, filled with pine, olive and chestnut trees. The tiny village of Porto-Fino is built in semi-circular form about this quiet basin.

We sailed slowly through the narrow strait which joins this delightful natural harbor to the sea and entered the amphitheatre of houses, crowned by a forest of a refreshing green hue, both being reflected in the quiet, round mirror where a few fishing smacks seem to be dozing.

One of them, manned by an old sailor, comes toward us. He greets and welcomes us, points to a place for anchoring, takes hold of our cable to moor us to the shore, returns to offer his services and advice; in fine, does the honors of this fishing hamlet. He is the harbor master.

I never, perhaps, experienced a pleasanter sensation than when I entered this delightful green creek. I had a feeling of rest, soothing to the nerves, such as is afforded by the relaxation from the vain struggle of life's battles; and even the delightful sensation of hearing the noise of the falling anchor, telling me we were to remain here for some time, was as nothing compared to the first feeling.

For the last eight days now I have been rowing. The yacht is motionless in the middle of this quiet miniature harbor, and I meander in my canoe along the coast, in the grottoes where the ocean roars in invisible gaps, and around strange, lonely little islands, which it showers with endless kisses at each uprising, and over rocks wholly submerged in water or covered with seaweeds. I love to see, floating under the water, waving in the barely sensible motion of the waves, those long red or green weeds, in

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which are mingled and hidden, some even gliding in and out of the plants, numberless throngs of young fishes just hatched. One would take them for the live progeny of silver needles.

When I glance up at the rocks on the banks I see groups of naked boys, with swarthy little bodies, all of whom stare in surprise at me. They are innumerable, like the young fishes of the sea, just like a tribe of young new-born tritons, frolicking and scampering up the granite rocks to drink in the glorious air.

We have left Porto-Fino to spend a little time at Santa-Margherita. It is not a seaport, but it lies deep in a gulf, somewhat sheltered by a mole.

Here the land is so fascinating that it makes one forget the sea. The city is protected by two mountains converging to an angle and divided from one another by a valley leading to Genoa. On both these hills innumerable little paths between two stone walls three feet high intersect one another, go up and down, cross and recross, now narrow and stony, now assuming the form of ravines or stairs as they divide countless fields or rather orchards of olive and fig trees, garlanded with red vines. Through the foliage of the latter, climbing in the trees, we can catch a glimpse of the blue sea, red capes, white villages, sloping pine forests and the high mountain crests of gray granite. In front of the houses, scattered here and there, may be seen women making lace. In fact, throughout these parts you could hardly strike a doorway where there are not two or three of these women employed in this hereditary work, handling

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with delicate fingers numerous white or black threads, from which dangle, with a continual hop and skip, little yellow-colored sticks. These women are often pretty, tall and of proud demeanor, though careless in dress and not at all coquettish. Many still show traces of Saracen blood.

One day, in the street of a hamlet, one of them passed near me, leaving me an impression of such exquisite beauty as I never had seen before.

Under a heavy mass of dark hair which waved around her forehead, evidently betraying a hasty, careless arrangement, were the oval, brown features of an oriental or a daughter of the Moors, whose graceful carriage she still retained, but the Florentine sun had tinted her skin with gold. Her eyes—such eyes!—were large and of the deepest black, and she seemed to let escape unconsciously a caress through the longest and thickest eyelashes I ever had beheld. The skin around her eyes was darkened so strangely that had I not seen her in full daylight I should have suspected her of having had recourse to art.

When we meet such beautiful creatures in tatters, why can we not seize them and carry them away, if only to adorn them and tell them they are pretty and lose ourselves in the raptures of admiration? What if they do not understand the mystery of our enthusiasm, remain irresponsible, like all bewitching idols, made only to be loved by frenzied beings, trying to find words worthy of expressing the praise of their beauty?

However, if I had the choice between the most beautiful of living beings and that of the famous

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picture of a woman painted by Titian, which I saw again a week later in the great Council Hall, I would take Titian's reclining woman.

Florence—which appeals to me as the city where I should most ardently have loved to live in the olden times—still retains, for my eyes and my heart, an inexpressible charm, which attracts me, almost in a sensual manner, through the painting of this woman, the quintessence of a dream, prodigiously carnal in its suggestions! When I think of this city, so full of marvels that one invariably returns exhausted at the end of a day of sightseeing as a hunter is exhausted by walking, there rises up amid my recollections, like a sudden brightness, the remembrance of the long piece of canvas, on which this tall woman lies, naked and blonde, awake and serenely calm.

Then, after thus recalling the powerful seductive charm of a human body, the thought of the sweet and pure Madonnas rises in my mind, those of Raphael first, the "Madonna of the Goldfinch," the "Madonna Granduca," the "Madonna of the Chair" and others, besides those of the minor artists of the ancient times, with their innocent features, light hair, ideal and mystical, and those of the more material artists of a robust, healthy appearance.

As one wanders about this unique city, and even throughout the whole of Tuscany, where the men of the Renaissance strewed masterpieces with a free hand, one is filled with amazement at the exalted and fertile imagination, drunk with beauty, madly creative, of those former generations pulsating with artistic frenzy. In the churches of the small towns, where one goes to see things that have

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not already been pointed out to the ordinary traveller, one discovers on the walls, or at the back of the choir, priceless paintings of those modest masters, who did not sell their canvases in the yet unexplored America, but kept on working, though hopelessly poverty-stricken, for art's sake, like pious workmen.

And this race, which never faltered in its course, has left nothing inferior. The same ray of imperishable beauty that appeared from the brush of painters and from the chisel of sculptors grew larger in the shape of lines of stones on the face of the monuments. Their churches and chapels are filled with sculptures of Lucca della Robbia, Donatello, and Michelangelo; their bronze portals are by Bonannus or by John of Bologna.

Upon reaching the Piazza della Signoria, facing the Loggia dei Lanzi, we perceived, grouped together under the same portico, the "Rape of the Sabines" and "Hercules Wrestling with the Centaur"; "Nessus," by John of Bologna; "Perseus with the head of the Medusa," by Benvenuto Cellini, and "Judith and Holofernes," by Donatello. It sheltered, also, only a few years ago, the "David" of Michelangelo.

But the more one is bewildered, the more one is overcome by the seductive charm of a trip through this forest of works of art, the more one is seized, too, with a strange, uneasy feeling which soon mingles itself with the joy of seeing. It comes from the amazing contrast of the modern crowd, so commonplace, so ignorant of what it is looking at, and of the places it inhabits. You readily feel that the delicate soul, the proud and refined soul of the

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former race that filled this land with masterpieces, no longer exists in those heads with round, chocolate-colored hats, nor does it animate the indifferent eyes, exalt the vulgar tastes and desires of this dreamless, matter-of-fact population.

On my way back to the coast, I stopped at Pisa, to see the cathedral square again. Who will ever be able to explain the melancholy, penetrating charm of certain of those almost dead towns?

Pisa is one of them. No sooner have you entered it than you feel a melancholy languor, a powerless desire to remain and to run away, to flee from this listless lazy life and yet to stay and undergo the mournful charm of its air, its heaven, its houses, its streets that are inhabited by the quietest, the saddest, and the most silent of people.

Life seems to have left it as did the sea, when it abandoned its port, formerly supreme, and stretched a plain and gave birth to a forest between the new shore and the forsaken city.

The River Arno glides through, like a yellow, undulating streak, between high walls supporting the two principal promenades, lined with rows of yellow houses, some hotels, and a few modest-looking palaces.

Standing alone on the wharf itself, where it cuts the gleaming line of the river, the little chapel of Santa-Maria della Spina, belonging to the French architecture of the thirteenth century, shows its artistically wrought profile directly above the water. It looks, on the bank of the river, like a quaint Gothic laundry belonging to the Virgin Mary, where

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the angels come nightly to wash all the tarnished tinsel of the Madonnas.

But through the Via Santa Maria one reaches the Square of the Cathedral.

For those who are still affected by the beauty and the mystical power of architecture, assuredly nothing is more wonderful and thrilling than this vast, grass-carpeted square hemmed in by high enclosures, within which stand, in their totally different positions, the Cathedral, the Campo-Santo, the Baptistry, and the Leaning Tower.

When you reach the edge of this wild and deserted field, surrounded by old walls, suddenly before your eyes rise these four enormous marble structures, so extraordinary in their profile, color, harmonious and superb grace, and you are paralyzed with astonishment and admiration, as if you were before the rarest and most grandiose spectacle that human art can offer to your gaze.

But soon the Duomo attracts and rivets your whole attention with its inexpressible harmony, the irresistible power of its proportions and magnificent grandeur of its façade.

It is a basilica of the Tuscan style of the eleventh century, built of white marble with black and colored inlaid work. You do not experience, at the sight of this perfect example of Roman-Italian architecture, the same awe you feel in the presence of Gothic cathedrals, with their daring height, the elegant charm of their towers and belfries, the stone lacework in which they are enveloped, and the enormous disproportion between their size and their base.

But you remain so entranced with the irreproach

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able proportions, the beauty of the lines, of the decorations of the façade below, of the pilasters connected by arcades above, of four galleries of columns, each growing smaller, that the attraction of the monument reminds you of a beautiful poem.

It is useless to describe these things; one must see them in their own classical sky, of a peculiar blue, where the clouds, rolling above in silver masses, seem to have been copied from the paintings of Tuscan artists. For those old artists were realists, thoroughly imbued with the Italian atmosphere; and those who have imitated them under another sky are only the counterfeiters.

Behind the Cathedral, the Campanile, forever leaning over as though about to fall, gives one an uncomfortable feeling, upsetting our notions of equilibrium; and facing it is the Baptistry, which, with its tall conical cupola, stands before the door of the Campo-Santo.

And in this ancient cemetery, whose frescoes are classed as paintings of special interest, stretches out a delightful cloister, with a subtle and gloomy charm, in the midst of which two lime trees hide beneath their foliage such a quantity of dead wood that the wind shakes it with a strange sound like the rattling of bones.

The days go by and the summer is drawing to an end. I wish to see another far-away country, where other men have left memories, less vivid, perhaps, though none the less eternal. These people are the only ones that have really endowed their country with a Universal Exposition that will always be visited in all centuries to come.

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CHAPTER IV

SICILY

People are convinced, in France, that Sicily is a wild country, difficult of access, and even dangerous to visit. Now and then a traveller, who is thought very daring, takes the risk of going as far as Palermo, and returns saying that the city is a very interesting one. And that is all. But in what respect are Palermo and Sicily interesting? No one knows. In truth, the whole thing is only a question of fashion. This island, the pearl of the Mediterranean, is not on the list of those countries usually visited by tourists, which it is considered in good taste to know, which, like Italy, make up a part of the education of a well-bred man.

From two special points of view, however, Sicily should attract travellers, because its natural and artistic beauties are as singular as they are wonderful. Every one knows how fertile is this land, which was once known as the granary of Italy, and which all nations, at one time or other, invaded and mastered, so strong was their desire to possess it, which was the cause of so many men fighting and dying for her sake as if she had been a beautiful woman, ardently desired. It is, just as much as Spain, the country of oranges and the land of flowers, whose air, in springtime, is like a perfumed breath; and every night it kindles, far above the sea, the monster lantern of Etna, the largest volcano in Europe. But what constitutes it, above all, a land unique and most interesting in this world

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is, that it is, from one end to the other, a strange and divine museum of architecture.

In this century, which is still artistic, architecture is dead in the sense that it seems to have lost the faculty of creating beautiful things in stone, the mysterious secret of the charm of artistic lines, the feeling of grace in architecture. We do not seem to understand any longer that even the simple proportions of a wall may convey to the mind the same artistic delight, the same deep and secret rapture, as is afforded by the sight of a masterpiece of Rembrandt, of Velasquez, or of Paolo Veronese.

Sicily had the good fortune to be occupied by prolific nations, one after another, from both south and north, who covered its territory with works of infinite variety, in which blend, in an unexpected and charming manner, the most contrary influences. From this has sprung a special art, unknown elsewhere, where the influence of the Arab is felt in the midst of Greek and even Egyptian memories, where the harshness of the Gothic style brought here by the Normans is tempered by the wonderful art of Byzantine ornamentation and decoration.

And it is a source of genuine delight to look for the special marks of each school in these exquisite monuments, to discern, here the detail from Egypt—the lanceolated arch, brought by the Arabs, the arched vaults in high relief, or rather pendent sculpture, resembling the stalactites of marine grottos, and there, the genuine Byzantine ornament, or the beautiful Gothic friezes which awaken memories of the tall cathedrals of colder countries or the low churches built by Norman princes.

After seeing these monuments, which, though be-

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longing to different periods and being of different origin still have the same character, the same nature, one can truly say that they are neither Gothic nor Arabic nor Byzantine, but Sicilian; one can assert that there is a Sicilian art and style, forever recognizable, which is assuredly more delightful, varied, more highly colored and full of conceptions, than all the other styles of architecture. It is also in Sicily that the most magnificent and complete examples of ancient Greek architecture can be found, in the midst of scenery of peerless beauty.

The passage from Naples to Palermo is the easiest and the best one to take. One is astonished, upon first leaving the boat, at the activity and life of this city of two hundred thousand inhabitants, which is filled with shops. It is noisy, though less animated than Naples, in spite of the fact that it is quite as full of life. The first thing to attract your attention, especially, are the carts. These are little square boxes perched on yellow wheels, decorated with crude and odd designs, representing historical facts, adventures of all kinds, contests, and even the meetings of sovereigns, but especially the battles of Napoleon I and those of the Crusaders. A peculiarly shaped piece of wood and iron secures the body of the cart to the axle; spokes of the wheels are also made of carved wood. The animal that draws it wears a gay-colored cotton ball on his head and another one on the back, and is harnessed with coquettish, colored straps, each piece of leather being adorned with red wool and tiny bells. These painted carts, queer-looking and each one different from the other, passing through the streets, attract

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the eye like conundrums we are continually trying to solve.

The general appearance of Palermo is peculiar. The city, lying in the midst of a vast amphitheatre of barren mountains of a grayish blue, tinted here and there with red, is divided into four parts by two long, straight streets, forming a cross in the middle. From this crossroad you see, on three sides, the mountain at the end of the immense corridors of houses, and on the fourth the sea, a deep blue spot, which appears to be quite close, as if the town had tumbled into it.

A strong desire haunted my mind, on the very first day of my arrival. I wished to see the Chapel Palatine, which I had been told was a marvel of marvels.

The Chapel Palatine, the most beautiful in the world, the most surprising religious jewel ever evolved by the human mind and the hand of an artist, is inclosed within the heavy edifice of the Palais-Royal, an ancient fortress built by the Normans.

This chapel has nothing remarkable in its exterior, but as we enter the palace we are immediately struck with the beauty of the interior, which is surrounded by columns. A beautiful winding staircase gives a perspective of startling effect. Facing the entrance door, another door, cut through the wall of the palace, opens suddenly on a deep and narrow horizon, revealing an endless expanse of country and boundless vistas, which greet the eye through this arched gap and carry one in imagination into boundless lands and limitless dreams as

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One gazes toward the blue crest of the hills in the distance, above an immense orange grove.

Upon entering the chapel, you are overcome with awe, as when first beholding a most surprising sight whose power is felt before it is understood. The calm and beauty of this little church, which is positively the most wonderful masterpiece imaginable, cause you to stand entranced before these walls with immense mosaics on a golden background, shining with a soft light that dimly illumines the whole edifice, leading one's mind into biblical and sacred landscapes, where one sees, in fancy, standing against a burning sky, all those who were associated with the life of Christ.

What renders the impression produced by these Sicilian monuments so striking is the fact that their decoration is at first more noticeable than their style of architecture.

The harmony of lines and proportions is only a framework for the blending of the colors.

On entering our Gothic cathedrals, we experience a stern, almost gloomy, sensation. Their grandeur is impressive; but their majestic stateliness does not captivate us. Here we are conquered, affected by that almost sensual impression which color adds to the beauty of form.

The men who conceived and executed these luminous though dark churches must have had an entirely different idea of religious feeling from that of the architects of German and French cathedrals; and their particular concern was that the light should enter these wondrously decorated naves in such a way that it would neither be seen nor felt, but would glide in imperceptibly, just skimming the

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walls and producing mysterious, delightful effects, as if the illumination came from the walls themselves, or from the golden ceilings peopled with apostles.

The Chapel Palatine, built in 1132 by King Roger II, after the Norman-Gothic style, is a small basilica with three naves. It is only thirty-three metres long by thirteen wide, a toylike affair, a miniature basilica.

Two rows of beautiful marble columns of different colors lead to the cupola, where a colossal figure of Christ, surrounded by angels with outstretched wings, looks down on you. The mosaic which forms the back of the side chapel to the left is a striking work of art. It represents St. John preaching in the desert. You would take it for a Puvis de Chavannes, but more highly colored, more forceful, more natural, with less affectation, executed at a period of deep religious faith by an inspired artist. The apostle is seen speaking to a few people. Behind him is the desert, and beyond that a few blue mountains whose soft outlines are lost in the mist—mountains so familiar to the Oriental traveller. About the saint, around and behind him, is a golden sky, a true sky of wonders where God seems to dwell.

Returning to the entrance, we stop beneath the pulpit, a single square of red marble, surrounded by a frieze of white marble, inlaid with small mosaics and supported on four columns delicately chiseled. One wonders at what the taste of a true artist can accomplish with so little.

The wonderful effect in all these churches is due to the contrast of the marbles and the mosaics. It

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is this that furnishes their characteristic work. The lower parts of the walls, which are white and are ornamented only with traceries like delicate stone embroideries, bring out forcibly, by the very fact of their simplicity, the wealth of color in the paintings above.

But you discover, even in that fine tracery that runs like colored lacework along the lower wall, delightful things about the size of your palm; for instance, two peacocks, whose beaks are intertwined, carrying a cross between them.

This style of decoration is to be found in many churches in Palermo. The mosaics of the Martorana are, perhaps, even more remarkable in their execution than those of the Palatine Chapel; but there cannot be found in any other monument the same marvellous completeness that makes this divine masterpiece unique.

I come back slowly to the Hotel of the Palms, which has one of the finest gardens in the city, one of those typical gardens of tropical countries, filled with enormous and strange plants. A traveller, seated on a bench, gives me in a few words the events of the past year, and going back to the memories of bygone years, he says, among other things: "This happened when Wagner lived here."

Astonished at this, I inquired: "What, here, in this hotel?" "Why, yes, it was while here that he wrote the last notes of *Parsifal* and corrected the proofs."

And I learn that the illustrious German master spent a whole winter in Palermo, and that he left this town only a few months before his death. Here, as everywhere else he lived, he showed his ungovern-

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able temper and unendurable pride, while he left the impression of being the most unsociable of men.

I wished to see the apartment occupied by this master musician, for it seemed to me that he must have left something of his strong personality, and that I should perhaps find some beloved object, a favorite chair, or the table at which he had worked. Surely some trace of his sojourn here, or, at least, the souvenir of a mania, or the indication of some habit.

At first I saw only a beautiful hotel apartment. I was shown the changes he had made here and there, the couch in the middle of the room, which he covered with brilliant rugs worked in gold.

Then I opened the door of a mirrored cabinet.

A delicious and powerful perfume blew out, like the caress of a breeze that has passed over a field of roses.

The proprietor of the hotel, who was my guide, said: "He kept his clothes in here, after perfuming them with essence of roses. This odor will never evaporate."

I inhaled, for a few seconds, this breath of flowers, inclosed in this piece of furniture, forgotten here, a captive; and it seemed, in truth, as if I had found something of Wagner in this perfume which he loved—a little of his personality, of his desires, of his soul, in this mere trifle, of the secret and cherished habits which go to make up a man's individuality.

I then went out and wandered about the town.

No one is less like a Neapolitan than a Sicilian. In the lower classes a Neapolitan is always three-fourths a clown. He gesticulates, becomes dis-

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turbed and excited without cause, expresses himself by gestures as well as by words, is always pleasant when he has an object to gain, is gracious through cunning as well as by nature, and always answers disagreeable remarks with some smooth saying.

But in the Sicilian one sees a great deal of the Arab. He has his sedateness of manner, combined with the active mind of the Italian. His native pride, his love of titles, the very nature of his pride, and even his features, make him more like a Spaniard than like an Italian. But that which gives one at all times the impression of the Orient is the peculiar voice, the nasal intonation of the street criers. One hears everywhere this shrill note of the Arab, which seems to come down from the forehead to the throat, instead of, as in the north, rising from the chest to the mouth. And the drawling song, monotonous and soft, heard through the open door of a house as we pass by, is surely the same, as to rhythm and accent, as that sung by the rider clothed in white who guides travellers through the endless and bare regions of the desert.

At the theatre, though, the Sicilian becomes Italian again; and it is very interesting to attend an operatic performance in Rome, Naples, or Palermo.

Every impression of the public is expressed as soon as felt. Excessively nervous, gifted with an ear as true as it is sensitive, loving music to distraction, the entire audience becomes a sort of vibrating animal, which feels but does not reason. In the space of five minutes it will applaud an actor with enthusiasm and hiss with frenzy; it stamps with joy or with rage, and if a false note escapes

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from the throat of the singer, a most peculiar, shrill, exasperated cry bursts from every throat at the same time. When opinions differ, the hissing and cheering are deafening. Nothing is allowed to pass unnoticed by these attentive and quivering hearers, who express every moment, and sometimes, seized with sudden anger, roar as would a menagerie of wild animals.

Carmen just now fascinates the Sicilian people, and one hears from morning till night the famous "Toreador" air hummed in the streets.

The streets of Palermo are not remarkable in any way. They are wide and well kept in the richer sections, and resemble in the poorer ones the narrow, winding, and tortuous lanes of all Oriental towns.

The women, dressed in gowns made of bright red, blue, or yellow rags, sit chatting before their doors, watching passers-by with their brilliant black eyes shining under a forest of dark hair.

Sometimes in front of the building of the official lottery, which is a permanent institution, like a religious service, bringing in a large revenue to the state, you witness a typical though comical incident.

Facing this building is a Madonna in its niche, with a lantern at its feet. A man comes out of the office, his lottery ticket in hand, puts a sou in the collection box that opens its little black mouth in front of the statue, and then makes the sign of the cross with the numbered ticket which he has just commended to the favorable attention of the Virgin, backing up his appeal with an alms.

Stopping here and there before the windows of the shops, your eye is soon attracted by a strange

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photograph that represents an underground tunnel, full of dead bodies, grinning skeletons, oddly clothed. One reads underneath: "Cemetery of the Capuchin Friars."

What can this be? If you ask an inhabitant of Palermo, he replies with disgust: "Don't go to see that horrible thing. It is a barbarous affair, which will disappear before long, thank goodness! Besides, no one is buried there any more."

It is difficult to obtain more detailed information, such is the horror the Sicilians have of these extraordinary catacombs.

This is, however, what I succeeded in finding out. The earth of the ground on which the convent of the Capuchin Friars is built possesses the peculiar property of hastening the decomposition of dead flesh, so that in a year there is nothing left on the bones but a dried, black skin, which clings to them, retaining sometimes the hair of the heads and cheeks.

The coffins are inclosed in small lateral vaults, each one containing eight or ten bodies, and when the year has passed the coffins are opened, and these horrible mummies, bearded and convulsed, as if howling in racking pain, are taken out. Then they are hung up in one of the principal corridors, where the family can visit them from time to time. People who wished to have their bodies preserved in this manner asked for it before they died, and they will remain forever hanging under these dim vaults, like objects kept in museums, in consideration of a stipulated sum paid annually for that purpose by the remaining relatives. When the latter cease to pay the bodies are buried in the usual manner.

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I was possessed at once by a strong desire to visit this sinister collection of departed beings.

At the door of a small convent of most unpretending appearance, on old Capuchin friar, clad in a brown robe, received me without a word, and led the way, knowing very well what strangers come here to see.

We cross a poor chapel, and with slow steps descend a stone staircase, and, suddenly, I see before me an immense corridor, high and wide, whose walls are covered with skeletons, clothed in the strangest and most grotesque fashion. Some are hung up, side by side, others lie on five stone tables, one over the other, from the floor to the ceiling. A row of dead bodies is standing up in a solid row on the ground, and their heads seem about to speak. Some are covered with a hideous vegetation, which distorts still more the jaws and bones; others again retain their hair, others a bit of mustache, others a few hairs of their beard.

Some look upward with their empty eyes, others look down; here are some that seem to be grinning horribly, and others that are contorted as if in pain; others again seem affrighted by some supernatural apparition.

They are clothed, these poor, hideous and ridiculous dead, clothed by their family, who have had them taken from their coffins and placed in this appalling assembly. Nearly all have some sort of black robe, the hood of which is sometimes drawn over the head. But there are some who were dressed sumptuously; and a miserable skeleton, with a head-dress consisting of a cap of Greek embroideries, and wrapped in a dressing gown, like that of a man of

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wealth, lies on its back, as if sleeping a terrifying though comical sleep.

A placard, like that a blind man carries, hangs from the neck, bearing the name and the date of death. These dates cause a shiver to go through one's very bones: 1880—1881—1882!

This, then, was a man eight years ago. It lived, laughed, spoke, ate and drank, and was full of joy and hope. And there it is now! Before this double row of indescribable beings, coffins and boxes are heaped up; some are expensive coffins in ebony, with brass ornaments and small, square glass openings. One would think they were trunks, valises of savages, that were bought in some bazaar by those who were setting out on the long journey, as people used to say.

But other corridors open to the right and left, indefinitely lengthening out this immense subterranean cemetery.

Here are the women, still more grotesque than the men, for they have been dressed up in a coquettish manner. The heads seem to look at you, confined as they are by caps with ribbons and lace showing as white as snow, around those black faces decayed and worn away by the strange action of the soil. The hands, resembling the severed roots of a tree, peep out from the sleeves of a new robe, and the stockings that inclose the bones of the leg seem empty. Sometimes the skeleton has only shoes on, great, clumsy shoes for the poor dried-up feet.

Here are young girls, hideous young girls, in their white garments, with a crown of metal around the head, as the symbol of innocence. They grin so horribly you would take them for very old women.

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And yet they are sixteen, eighteen, twenty. It is horrible.

We then reach a gallery full of little glass coffins. These are the children. The bones, hardly formed, have not been able to resist. And one can hardly distinguish anything, such is the distorted and fearful appearance presented by these poor little wretched beings. But you are moved to tears, for the mothers have dressed them in the last garments they wore on earth. And the parents come to see them thus.

In many instances a photograph hangs above the skeleton, showing the child as it looked when alive, and nothing is so startling as this contrast evoked by the comparison of the two, and the thoughts it evokes.

We go through a darker and lower corridor, that seems to have been reserved for the poor. In a dark corner are apparently a score of them, hung up under a transom, through which blows the outer air in fitful gusts. They are clothed in a sort of black linen, tied at the neck and feet, and they all lean over one another. They look as if they were freezing and wanted to get away, and even shouting: "Help! Help!" You might take them for the crew of some ship, still buffeted by the wind, clad in the brown and tarred oilskins worn by the sailors in a storm.

And here is the part set aside for the priests. A large hall of honor. At first sight they seem more horrible to look at than the others, clothed in their sacred vestments—black, red, or purple. But, when you look at each one separately, a nervous and irresistible smile is evoked at their strange and weirdly

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comical attitudes. Here are some that look as if they were about to sing; others seem to be praying. Some one has raised their heads and crossed their arms. Some wear the biretta of an officiating priest, which, placed on the fleshless brow, now and then falls rakishly over the ear or else over the nose. It is the carnival of death, rendered more incongruous by the gilded richness of ornamentation of the sacerdotal garments.

Now and then, it is said, some of the heads roll to the ground, the cords of the neck having been gnawed by the mice. Thousands of these live in this human-flesh warehouse.

The remains of a man who died in 1882 were shown to me. A few months previous, full of life and thoroughly happy, he had come to choose his place, accompanied by a friend. "I shall be there some time," said he laughingly.

The friend comes back alone now and gazes for hours at a time at the motionless skeleton, standing erect at the place he had pointed out himself.

On certain feast days the catacombs of the Capuchin Friars are opened to the public. A drunkard once fell asleep there and woke up in the middle of the night. He called, shrieking with fright and running about on all sides in his desperate effort to escape; but no one heard him. He was found next morning, clinging so tightly to the bar of the entrance gate that he was removed with difficulty. He had become insane. Since that day a large bell has been hung near the doorway.

After this gloomy visit I felt the desire to see some flowers, and I drove to the Villa Tasca, the

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gardens of which in the midst of an orange grove are filled with magnificent tropical plants.

On returning to Palermo I saw at the left a small town about half way up a hill, and on the summit was a ruin. This town is Monreale and the ruin is Castellaccio, the last refuge of the Sicilian brigands, I was told.

Théodore de Banville, the master poet, wrote a treatise on French prosody which all would-be poets ought to know by heart. One of the chapters of this excellent book is entitled "Concerning Poetic License," and when you turn the page you read:

"There is none."

Thus, on reaching Sicily, one asks, sometimes from idle curiosity, again from anxiety: "Where are the brigands?" and every one answers you, "There are none."

There have been none for the past five or six years. Thanks to the secret complicity of certain landed proprietors, whose interests the brigands served as often as they plundered them, they managed to exist in the mountains of Sicily until the arrival of General Palavicini, who is still the commanding officer in Palermo. But this officer pursued them with such energy that the last of them disappeared in a short time.

It is true that there are often attacks by armed men, and assassinations are still frequent; but these are crimes committed by lone criminals and not by organized bands as formerly.

After all, Sicily is as safe a country for any traveller as England, France, Germany or Italy, and those who are seeking adventures of the *Fra Diavolo* sort had better look elsewhere.

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The truth is that a man is safe anywhere except in the large cities. If one would take the trouble to count the number of travellers held up and plundered by bandits in wild countries and those assassinated by the wandering tribes of the desert and compare the accidents that happen in these places, reputed so dangerous, with those that occur in a month in London, Paris or New York, we should find how comparatively safe these dreaded regions are.

Moral: If you are looking for cutthroats go to Paris, or London, or New York, but do not come to Sicily. In this country you can go about the highways day and night without an escort and unarmed; you will meet only people who are exceedingly gracious to strangers, except, perhaps, those employed by the post and telegraph offices. I speak, however, only of those of Catania.

About half way up one of the mountains which overlook Palermo is the little town called Monreale, famous for its ancient monuments; and in the vicinity of this city, perched far up in the mountains, the brigands used to conduct their operations. The practice of placing sentinels along the road that leads to it is still continued. Do they thereby wish to reassure the travellers or to scare them? I do not know.

The soldiers stationed at each turn of the road remind one of the legendary sentinel of the War Department in France. For ten years, without any known reason, a soldier was placed on sentry duty in the corridor leading to the minister's apartments, with instructions to keep passers-by away from the wall. Now, it happened that a new minister, of an inquisitive turn of mind, on succeeding fifty others

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who had passed this functionary without paying special attention to him, asked whence came this custom.

No one could tell him, neither the cabinet minister nor any of his colleagues. But one of the ushers, who probably kept a careful diary, recalled that a soldier had been put there formerly because the wall had been freshly painted and the minister's wife, not having been cautioned, ruined her gown. The paint had dried, but the sentinel remained.

And so the brigands have disappeared, but the men are still to be seen on duty. The road winds round the mountain and finally reaches the city, which is peculiar, highly colored and very dirty. The streets are in steps, which seem to be made of sharp teeth. The heads of the men are bound in red handkerchiefs, after the Spanish fashion.

Here is the Cathedral, a great edifice, more than three hundred feet long, the shape of a Latin cross, with three apses and three naves, separated by eighteen columns of Oriental granite, resting on a base of white marble and a pedestal of gray marble. The entrance, which is really admirable, contains two magnificent bronze doors, made by "*Bonannus, civis Pisanus*."

The interior of this building displays the most complete, the richest and the most startling work in mosaic decoration that can be found anywhere.

These mosaics, the largest in Sicily, cover the walls entirely—a surface of six thousand four hundred metres. Just picture to yourself these immense and superb decorations, which represent, throughout the whole church, the mythical stories of the Old Testament, of the Messiah and of the Apostles. On a golden sky, all round the naves, you can see, larger

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than life-size, the prophets announcing the coming of the Redeemer, then Christ and those who lived in His time.

Back of the choir an immense figure of Jesus, whose features resemble those of Francis I., commands the whole church, seeming to fill it and crush it, so large and impressive is this strange figure.

It is to be regretted that the ceiling, destroyed by a fire, should have been redecorated in the crudest manner. The loud tones of the gilding and coloring are very displeasing to the eye.

Quite close to the Cathedral we enter the old cloister of the Benedictines. Let those who have a liking for cloisters go and walk through this one, and they will at once forget almost entirely any others they may have seen before.

How could one help worshipping cloisters, those quiet, secluded and cool spots, invented, it would seem, to inspire the deep, clear thought that flows freely from the lips while one walks slowly under these long, melancholy arcades?

How especially do they seem to have been made to engender day dreams, these stone paths, with small columns enclosing a garden which rests the eye without causing it to wander, without diverting one's attention.

But the cloisters in our countries are sometimes a little too severely monastic, too sad, even the most beautiful of them, like that at Saint-Wandrille, in Normandy. They cause a tightening of the heart and make one feel gloomy.

Let any one visit the dreary cloister of the Char-treuse in the Province of Verne, among the wild

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mountains of the Moors. It strikes a chill to one's marrow.

The wonderful cloister of Monreale, on the contrary, gives you such a sensation of beauty that you would fain remain in it for an indefinite length of time. It is very large, square, of a pretty and delicate elegance; no one that has not seen it can even understand the harmony of a colonnade. The exquisite proportions, the incredible slenderness of all these slight columns, as they stand two by two, each pair different, some in mosaics and others plain—these covered with sculptures of peerless delicacy and those ornamented with a simple design carved in the stone and climbing and clinging round them like ivy—astonish the gaze, charm it, giving birth to that artistic delight which one feels in the presence of perfect taste.

And, like these pretty little columns, the capitals are also of a charmingly varied design. One is astonished at the very rare combination of the admirable effect of the whole and the perfection of every detail.

One cannot view this masterpiece of artistic beauty without recalling the verses of Victor Hugo on the Greek artist who could put

Something as beautiful as the human smile,
On the profile of the Propylæa.

This beautiful walk is enclosed between very high and very old walls, with pointed arcades. It is now all that is left of the convent.

Sicily is the birthplace, the true and only country of colonnades. The interior courts of the old palaces and houses of Palermo contain some that

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are beautiful, which would be renowned anywhere, but particularly so in this island so rich in monuments.

The little cloister of the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, one of the oldest churches of Norman architecture with an Oriental character, though less remarkable than that of Monreale, is still superior to anything of the kind with which I am familiar.

On leaving the convent one enters the garden where one can look down upon the whole valley full of blossoming orange trees. A continuous breeze rises from this perfumed forest, a breeze that enraptures the mind and disturbs the senses. The vague, poetical craving that forever haunts the soul, prowling about, maddening and unattainable, here seems on the point of being satisfied. This odor surrounds one, mingling the refined sensation of perfumes with the artistic joys of the mind, throws you for a few seconds into a well-being of mind and body that is almost happiness.

Upon raising my eyes toward the high mountain towering over the city, I perceive on its summit the ruin I had noticed the day before. I learn upon inquiry that that château was the last repair of the Sicilian brigands. Even to-day very few people ever go up to this ancient castle, called Castellaccio. The path, on a high hill difficult of access, is hardly known. But we are bent upon going there. One of the gentlemen of Palermo, who is doing the honors of his country, insists upon giving us a guide. Unable to find a guide sure of his way, he applied, unknown to us, to the chief of police, and in a short time a man of whose real calling we were ignorant began the ascent of the mountain with us.

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But he himself hesitates, and, meeting another man, he asks him to join us. Thus we have now a guide for our guide. They question every one they meet. Finally a priest advises us to go straight ahead of us. And we begin to climb, followed by our leaders.

The road now is almost impracticable. Rocks must be scaled, and we must use every bit of our strength to raise ourselves from one place to another. And this lasts a long while.

We finally reach the summit where the castle itself is buried in a wonderful chaos of enormous gray stones, smooth or sharp-pointed, which surround it and spread far out on all sides.

The view from this summit is one of the most wonderful to be seen anywhere. All round this bristling hill are deep valleys enclosed by other hills, broadening out toward the interior of Sicily into an endless horizon of peaks and summits. Facing us is the sea, at our feet Palermo. The city is surrounded by that forest of orange trees which has been called "the shell of gold," and this forest of black verdure spreads like a dark stain at the foot of grayish and reddish mountains, which seem burned, wasted and gilded by the sun, so bare and yellow are they.

One of our guides has disappeared, the other follows us into the ruins. They are of a beautiful wildness and quite extensive. One sees readily that no one visits them. Everywhere the ground sounds hollow under our feet; sometimes an entrance to the subterranean passage may be seen. The man examines them with curiosity and tells us that many brigands lived there formerly. This was their safest

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refuge and the one most dreaded. As we are about to descend the first guide reappears, but we decline his services and find without difficulty a very easy path which could be used even by women.

The Sicilians seem to have taken pleasure in exaggerating and multiplying stories of bandits to frighten strangers; and to-day travellers hesitate to land on this island, which is as quiet and as safe as Switzerland.

To illustrate this I give one of these adventures with these terrible malefactors, which I guarantee to be true. A very distinguished entomologist of Palermo, M. Ragusa, discovered a coleoptera which for a long time had been confounded with the *Polyphylla Olivieri*. Now, a German scientist, M. Kraatz, recognizing that it belonged to an entirely distinct species, desired to possess some specimens of it, and wrote to one of his Sicilian friends, M. di Stephani, who in his turn addressed himself to M. Giuseppe Miraglia, to beg him to capture for him some of these insects. But they had disappeared from that part of the country. Just at this time M. Lombardo Martorana, of Trapani, announced to M. di Stephani that he had just got more than fifteen polyphylla.

M. di Stephani hastened to inform M. Miraglia in the following letter:

MY DEAR JOSEPH: The *Polyphylla Olivieri*, having had warning of your murderous intentions, has taken another route, and has found a refuge on the coast of Trapani, where my friend Lombardo has already captured more than fifteen individuals.

Now the adventure takes on the tragi-comic character of an epic.

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At this time the neighborhood of Trapani was infested, it seems, by a brigand named Lombardo. Now, M. Miraglia had thrown his friend's letter into the wastebasket. A servant emptied the basket in the street; then the street cleaner passed by and carried out to the dump heap the refuse that he had gathered. A peasant crossing that part of the country saw a pretty bit of blue paper, only slightly crumpled, picked it up and put it in his pocket, partly through precaution and partly through an instinctive desire to turn it, some way or other, into money.

Several months passed. Then this man, having been appointed to a collectorship, threw away the letter. A policeman picked it up and presented it to a judge, who immediately fell upon these words: "Murderous intentions . . . taken another route . . . found refuge . . . captured . . . Lombardo."

The peasant was imprisoned, questioned, almost tortured. He knew nothing. They kept him imprisoned, and a severe examination was begun. The magistrates published the suspicious letter, but as they had read "Petronilla Olivieri" instead of "Polyphylla," the entomologists took no notice of it.

Finally they deciphered the signature of M. di Stephani, who was summoned to court. His explanations were not admitted. M. Miraglia, questioned in his turn, finally cleared up the mystery.

The peasant had remained three months in prison. One of the last Sicilian brigands was then in reality known as a species of bug, christened by men of science under the name of *Polyphylla Ragusa*.

To-day there is no less dangerous occupation than that of travelling in Sicily, either in a carriage or on

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horseback, or even on foot. All the more interesting excursions can be made in carriages. The first one to be undertaken is that to the Temple of Ségasta.

So many poets have sung the praises of Greece that every one thinks he knows it, and carries a mental picture of the country, such as he would like it to be or as it looks in his dreams.

Sicily has realized this dream in my case; it pictures Greece to me, and when I think of that land of the arts I seem to see tall mountains, with soft classical outlines, and on their summits those severe-looking temples, somewhat massive, perhaps, but admirably majestic, which one meets everywhere in this island.

Every one has seen Pæstum and admired the three superb ruins scattered on this bare plain, of which the distant sea seems a continuation, and enclosed on the other side by a large curve of bluish hills. But if the Temple of Neptune is in better condition and in purer style (so it is said) than the temples of Sicily, these latter are placed in such unexpected marvellous landscapes that words cannot render the impression they leave on the mind.

On leaving Palermo you first reach the extensive forest, known as "The Shell of Gold," and then a railway follows a shore of reddish mountains and rocks. The road finally leads toward the interior of the island, and we leave the train at the station of Alcamo-Calatafimi.

Then we go through a country that undulates like monstrous waves on a motionless sea. There are no forests, few trees, but plenty of vines and cultivated fields, and the road lies through two uninter-

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rupted rows of blossoming aloes. They look as if, according to certain instructions, they had all grown to the same height, forming the immense, weird hedgerow and column sung by so many poets. You can see, far in the distance, a multitude of these war-like plants, which are thick and sharp-pointed, carrying with them, as it were, the weapons and banner of battle.

After about two hours' travelling you suddenly perceive two high mountains, joined by an easy path, shaped like a crescent, which rises between their summit, and in the middle of this crescent is the profile of a Greek temple, one of those impressive and beautiful monuments that a bygone artistic nation erected to its demi-gods.

You must go round one of these hills by a winding road and then you can see the temple once more, but this time you see it in full. From here it looks as if it were leaning against the mountain, from which it is really separated by a deep ravine, but the mountains spread all around it as if to shelter it. It stands out distinctly, with its thirty-six Doric columns against the curtain of verdure, which forms a background for this enormous monument, standing alone in this solitary, limitless country.

You feel, on seeing this magnificent landscape, that nothing but a Greek temple could be erected here, and only here would it be in harmony with its surroundings. This Temple of Ségasta was placed at the foot of the mountain by a man of genius, who appears to have been inspired as to the exact position it should occupy. It brightens up the wide landscape; it vivifies it and makes it divinely beautiful.

On the top of the mountain whose base we circled

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to reach the temple we find the ruins of the theatre.

When you travel in a country that the Greeks have colonized it is only necessary to find their theatres to get the finest views. That of Ségasta, on the crest of a mountain, is the centre of an amphitheatre of small mountains, whose circumference is one hundred and fifty to two hundred kilometres. You discover a few more summits behind these, and through a wide valley facing us we perceive the sea, which is a deep blue in the midst of all this green.

When you have seen Ségasta you can go to see Sélinonte, an immense pile of columns that have fallen in a row, side by side, like dead soldiers, or else are crumbled in a heap. The ruins of these giant temples, the greatest in Europe, fill a large plain and also cover a small hill beyond that. They follow the beach of light-colored sand, where are moored a few fishing smacks, without any place in sight that fishermen might inhabit. This shapeless heap of stones, however, can interest only archæologists or poetical souls affected by all traces of the past.

But Girgenti, the ancient Agrigentum, situated like Sélinonte on the southern coast of Sicily, offers the most extraordinary collection of temples that one could possibly find.

At the side of a long, stony, barren hill of a reddish tint, without a blade of grass or a shrub, and overlooking the sea, the beach, the seaport, three magnificent stone temples are silhouetted from below against the blue of a southern sky.

They appear to stand in the air unsupported, in the middle of a magnificent though desolate land-

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scape. Everything around them is dead—that is, dry and yellow. The sun has burned and destroyed the earth. Is it the sun, after all, that has bleached the soil in this manner or the deep fire that forever burns in the veins of this volcanic island? For all around Girgenti is stretched the peculiar country of the sulphur mines. Everything in the vicinity is sulphurous—the earth, the stones, the sand.

The temples, eternal abodes of the gods, dead like their human brothers, remain on their wild hills, with only a distance of half a kilometer between them.

The first is that of the Lacinian Juno, which contained, it is said, the famous painting of Juno by Zeuxis, who had for models the five most beautiful girls of Acragas.

Then the Temple of Concord, one of the temples of antiquity still in the best state of preservation, which was used as a church in the Middle Ages.

Farther away are the remains of the Temple of Hercules, and last the Temple of Jupiter, praised by Polybius and described by Diodorus, constructed in the fifth century and containing thirty-eight half columns, eighteen feet in circumference. A man can stand erect in each fluting.

Seated on the roadside, which runs along the foot of this wonderful coast, one dreams in presence of these wonderful monuments of the greatest of all artist nations. It seems as if the whole of Olympus were before us, the Olympus of Homer and the Greek poets, the Olympus of charming, carnal gods, who were of the same clay and as passionate as we are, who impersonated, in a poetical manner, the

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tender love of our hearts, the dream of our souls and all the instincts of our senses.

Antiquity itself rears its head against this ancient sky. A powerful and strange feeling comes over us, a desire to kneel before the august remains left here by the masters of our masters.

There is certainly something divine about this Sicilian land, for if we find these last abodes of Juno, Jupiter, Mercury or Hercules we also meet the most remarkable Christian churches in the world. The remembrance of the cathedrals of Cefalu or Monreale and of the Palatine Chapel, that marvel of marvels, remains even deeper and more powerful than that of the Greek monuments.

At the end of the hill of the Temples of Girgenti begins a most extraordinary country, which might be the Kingdom of Satan; for if, as it was believed in ancient times, the devil inhabited a vast subterranean region, filled with melting sulphur, where he boiled the souls of the damned, then without a doubt it was in Sicily that he elected to have his mysterious abode. Sicily supplies almost the whole world with sulphur. Thousands of mines may be found in this island of fire.

But first, a few kilometers from the town, we come across a little strange-looking hillock, called Maccaluba, which is composed of clay and limestone and covered with small cones two or three feet high. You might take them for blisters, some terribly monstrous disease of nature, for they emit a warm mud as if the soil were suppurating, and sometimes they hurl stones to a considerable height, roaring and throwing out foul gases. They growl, as it were,

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these horrible leprous little volcanoes, these running sores.

We next wish to visit the sulphur mines. We then go into the mountains. Before us stretches a desolate country, a wretched soil, which appears to have been cursed by nature. The valleys are gray, yellow, stony and sinister, bearing the stigma of a divine reprobation in their solitude and poverty, which nevertheless possesses a certain grandeur.

Finally we reach a few miserable-looking buildings. Here are the mines of which there are more than a thousand in the neighborhood, it is said.

On entering the enclosure of one of them you notice, at first, a singular hillock, grayish and smoky. It is a real sulphur well, made by human hands.

But on the other side of the island, a few hours from the coast, is one of the most wonderful phenomena that can be seen anywhere. I mean the island of the volcano, that fantastic flower of sulphur, which blooms in mid-ocean.

You leave Messina at midnight in a wretched steamboat, where the first-class passengers are unable to find a seat, even on deck.

Not the slightest breeze; the boat alone disturbs the quiet of the night.

The shores of Sicily and those of Calabria exhale such a powerful odor of blossoming orange trees that the whole channel is perfumed by it, as if it were a lady's bower. The city is soon left behind, and you pass between Scylla and Charybdis. The mountains become lower, while above them appears the flat and snowy summit of Mount Etna, silvery in the light of the full moon.

Then we fall asleep for a while, lulled by the

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monotonous noise of the ship's paddles, and we awoken to find that it is almost daybreak.

Now we are opposite the Lipari Islands. The first on the left and the last on the right emit a thick white smoke. They are the Volcano and Stromboli, and between them may be seen the Lipari, the Filicuri, the Alicuri and a few other low and small islands.

Lipari, where we land first, is composed of a few white houses, at the foot of a green hill. The place is fertile and charming, surrounded by beautiful rocks of a peculiar shape and of a deep subdued red. There are mineral waters, which made it popular in bygone days.

Lipari ends on the north side in an unusually white mountain, which might be mistaken for one of snow were it in a colder country. It is here that the world supplies itself with pumice stone.

I hired a boat with four oarsmen to go and see the island of the Volcano.

The reflection of the red rocks in the blue sea is a strange sight. A little strait is passed that divides the two islands. The crest of the island of the Volcano rises above the waves like a submerged crater.

It is a small uncultivated island, whose peak is thirteen hundred feet high, and it has a surface of twenty square kilometers. We go round another islet, the Volcanello, which rose suddenly from the sea about the year 200 B.C. and is united to the larger island by a narrow strip of land, overflowed by the waves on stormy days.

Now we are in a deep bay facing the smoking crater. At its foot is a house occupied by an Englishman, who is sleeping, they say, otherwise I never

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could climb this volcano, which is exploited by this manufacturer; but he is asleep, so I can cross a large kitchen garden, then vineyards belonging to him and again a forest of Spanish broom in flower. One would say it was an immense yellow desert, draped about the sharp cones, whose top is also of the same color, blinding under the glare of the sun. I ascend by a narrow path, steep and slippery, winding through cinders and lava. As in Switzerland we sometimes see a stream falling from the top of a mountain, so here we find a motionless cascade of sulphur that has poured through a fissure. It is like a stream of congealed light, flowing sunlight.

I finally reached the crest, where a broad level surrounds the crater. The earth quakes, and in front of me, from an opening the size of a man's head, issues with great force an immense jet of flame and steam, while from the edge of this hole pours the liquid sulphur, gilded by the fire. It forms into a yellow lake, which quickly hardens around this weird spring. Farther away other openings throw out white vapors, which rise heavily in the blue atmosphere.

I advance with a certain sensation of fear on the hot cinders and lava as far as the edge of the crater, and the most wonderful sight greets my eye.

Deep in this immense well, called the Fossa, which is sixteen hundred feet across and about six hundred feet deep, from a dozen giant fissures and round holes pour fire, smoke and sulphur with a noise like that of immense boilers. You can go down the sides of this abyss and walk along the edge of the volcano. Everything around, under my feet and above me, is yellow, blinding, maddening yellow. Everything is

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yellow: the soil, the high walls and the sky itself. The yellow sun pours its brilliant light into this seething pool, the heat from which causes the sunlight to burn you painfully. And you see the yellow liquid boiling as it flows, and strange crystals forming, and weird and dazzling acid formations on the red edges of these furnaces.

The Englishman whom we left sleeping at the foot of the hill makes a business of gathering, storing and selling these acids and liquids—in fact, everything the crater throws up; for they say all this is worth money, a great deal of money, too.

I come back slowly, out of breath, panting, suffocated by the unendurable fumes of the volcano; and on climbing back to the summit I saw all the Lipari Islands scattered about on the waves. Far away rises Stromboli, while behind me gigantic Etna appears to look down on its children and grandchildren.

On my way back from on board the boat I had discovered an island behind Lipari. The boatman said it was Salina. That is the place where Malmsey wine is made.

I wanted to drink some of it. It is like a syrup of sulphur. It is the wine of volcanoes—thick, sweet, golden and so full of sulphur that the taste remains for hours afterward. It ought to be called the devil's drink.

The wretched ship that brought me takes me back. At first I look at Stromboli, a round, high mountain, whose summit smokes and whose base is in deep water. It is only a cone emerging from the water. Clinging to its sides I notice a few houses, which look like sea shells. Then my eyes turn toward Sicily, which we are approaching, and I cannot see

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anything but Mount Etna, which seems to crush it down with its tremendous weight, rearing its snow-covered head above all the other mountains on the island. They look like dwarfs, those other large mountains below it, and Etna itself seems of low stature, such is its great massiveness. To realize thoroughly the size of this weighty giant, one must see it from far out at sea.

To the left are the hilly shores of Calabria and the Strait of Messina, which resembles the mouth of a gulf. We pass through it, and presently enter the harbor. The city is without great interest, and we leave the same day for Catania. We go to Taormina.

Should a person who had only a day to spend in Sicily ask me what to see, I should answer, Taormina.

It is only a landscape, but a landscape where you find everything that can possibly appeal to the eye, the mind and the imagination.

The village rests on a tall mountain, as if it had rolled down from the summit; but we do not stop there, although it contains some pretty relics of the past, but go to the Greek temple to see the sunset.

I have already said, speaking of the theatre of Ségasta, that the Greeks, incomparable decorators as they were, knew how to choose the one and only place where theatres, those houses built for the pleasures of our artistic senses, should be erected.

The one of Taormina is so marvellously situated that there cannot be another spot in the world that can compare with it. When one enters it, goes over the stage, the only one that has come down to us in a good state of preservation, one climbs the tumble-down and grass-grown tiers of seats that spectators

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formerly occupied, where thirty-five thousand people could be seated, and gazes about in astonishment.

You first see the ruin, sad, magnificent, the beautiful white marble pillars with their capitals still standing. Then from the walls you see the sea beneath you stretching away as far as the eye can see, its coast, extending to the horizon, covered with immense rocks, bordered with golden sands and with white villages scattered along it. Then, to the right, towering above everything, filling half the sky with its bulk stands Etna, covered with snow and emitting smoke.

Where can you find the races who could accomplish such things at the present day? Where are the men who could erect, for the pleasure of the masses, edifices like this?

Now we resume our journey toward Catania, whence I wish to climb the volcano.

The monster is about thirty or forty kilometers distant. This makes us appreciate how enormous it must really be. From its huge, black, cavernous mouth it has thrown up, from time to time, a burning flow of bitumen, which, running down its gentle or rapid slopes, has filled valleys, buried villages, drowned men as a river would, and finally has ended at the sea, driving it back with great force. They have formed cliffs, mountains and ravines, these slow, yeasty, red waves; and as their color darkened when they hardened they have spread all around this immense volcano a curious black coating full of fissures and humps and windings and peculiar designs, caused by the vagaries of eruptions and the whimsical humor of the hot lava.

Sometimes Mount Etna remains undisturbed for

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centuries at a time, only puffing into the sky its thick smoke. Then, under the action of the sun and rain, the old streams of lava are reduced to a sort of ashes, a sandy black soil in which olives, oranges, lemons, pomegranates and vines are grown for the market.

Nothing is so green, so pretty or even so charming as Aci-Reale, in the midst of a forest of orange and olive trees. But, every now and then, you find a large black stretch on which time has had no effect, which has retained all its fantastic forms, extraordinary shapes that look like animals with their limbs twisted, intertwined.

We reached Catania, a large and fine city built entirely on lava, and from the windows of the Grand Hotel we could see the summit of Mount Etna.

Thanks to the kindness of M. Ragusa, a member of the Alpine Club, we were enabled to make the ascent of the volcano with great facility, in spite of the fact that it is a fatiguing climb, although not dangerous.

A carriage drove us first to Nicolisi, through fields and gardens full of trees grown in the pulverized lava. Now and then our road crossed immense tracts of lava, and everywhere the soil was black.

After three hours' walk and easy uphill climbing, we reached the last village at the foot of Mount Etna, called Nicolisi, which is over two thousand two hundred feet high, though only fourteen kilometers from Catania.

We now left the carriage and resumed our journey with guides and mules. We wore woolen stockings and gloves.

All about us now were vines that had been planted in lava; some were young, others old. Then a plain of lava covered with flowering broom, a golden plain.

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We then crossed the enormous lava stream of 1882 and were astonished at the sight of the immense river, so black and motionless, a bubbling, petrified stream, which poured down from the very top of the smoking crater, fully twenty kilometers away. It had followed valleys, rounded peaks and crossed plains, this river, and here it was now before us, checked in its progress, as its source of fire had become exhausted.

We kept on climbing, leaving on our right the Mounts Rossi, and were constantly discovering new mountains, which the guides called the sons of Mount Etna, and which have sprouted up near the monster, that wears, as it were, a necklace of volcanoes. They number as many as three hundred and fifty, these black offspring of this giant parent, and many of them are as high as Vesuvius.

We finally reached La Casa del Bosco, a kind of hut inhabited by five or six woodcutters. The guide declared it was impossible to go farther in the hurricane that was blowing and asked for a night's hospitality. The hut itself trembled under the blasts of the storm, and the wind blew furiously through the loose tiles of the roof.

Daylight came and the wind had died down. All about us now was a region of valleys with black soil which ascended gently toward the region of glittering snow at the foot of the last cone, nine hundred feet high.

Now we struck the first snow level. We avoided it by a turn in the road. But another followed it very soon, which we had to cross. The mules hesitated, tested the ground with their hoofs, advancing cautiously. All of a sudden I felt as if I were sinking

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into the earth. The two front legs of my mount broke through the crust on which he was treading and were buried in the ground up to his breast. The unfortunate beast struggled affrighted, rising only to sink in deeper and fall in with all four feet through the snow crust.

The other mules were in the same position. We had to dismount, calm, help and even drag the poor beasts. Every minute they fell and plunged in this white and cold mass, in which even our feet sank at times up to our knees. Between these snow passes, which filled up the valleys, we found again great fields of lava, looking like stretches of black velvet, glittering in the sun with the same brilliancy as the snow. This was the deserted region, the dead region, which seemed in mourning, either all white or all black, blinding and horrible, though superb—a sight never to be forgotten.

After four hours' walking and toiling we reached the Casa Inglese, a small stone house surrounded with ice and almost buried in the snow at the foot of the last cone that rises behind it in a shroud of smoke.

It took us about an hour to climb the nine hundred feet which separated us from the crater. For some time sulphurous and suffocating vapors had been floating about. We had noticed to the right, and again to the left, huge jets of steam bursting from crevices in the soil, and our hands had felt the scorching heat of large stones. At last we reached a narrow platform. Before us a dense cloud rose slowly, like a white curtain coming out of the earth. We advanced with covered nostrils and mouth, so as not to be suffocated by the sulphur fumes, and

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suddenly at our feet opened an enormous and fearful abyss, about three miles in circumference. Through the stifling vapor you can hardly distinguish the other side of this huge hole, five thousand feet across, whose perpendicular sides go down to the mysterious and terrible land of fire.

Everything around us was even more strange. Sicily was hidden under mists that ended at the edge of the coast, concealing only the land, so that we seemed to be up in the heavens, as it were, in the midst of seas, above the clouds, so very high that the Mediterranean spread out on all sides as far as the eye could reach, looked like part of the very sky itself. The azure enwrapped us on all sides. We were standing on an extraordinary mountain, rising out of the clouds and bathed in the sky, which stretched above our heads, beneath our feet, everywhere.

But by degrees the mists over the island rose about us, encircling very soon the immense volcano with an abyss of clouds. It was now our turn to be at the bottom of a perfectly white crater, from the depths of which we could see only the blue sky, far above our heads.

But on other days the spectacle is entirely different.

We awaited the rising of the sun, which appeared from behind the hills of Calabria. These threw out their shadow on the sea, as far as the foot of Mount Etna, whose dark silhouette covered Sicily with its immense triangle, which disappeared as the sun ascended in the sky. There then came to light before us a panorama four hundred kilometers in diameter and one thousand three hundred in circumference,

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with Italy at the north and the Lipari Islands, whose two volcanoes looked as if they were saluting their sire, while toward the south, barely visible, we saw Malta. In the harbors of Sicily the ships had the appearance of insects on the sea.

Alexandre Dumas *père* has given an excellent and very enthusiastic description of this spectacle.

After returning to Catania we left next day for Syracuse.

This is the city with which one ought to wind up an excursion in Sicily. It was as illustrious at one time as any of the larger towns; its tyrants rendered their reigns as celebrated as that of Nero; it produces a wine which poets have made famous. On the banks of the gulf on which it is situated there is a very small river, the Anapo, where grows the papyrus, the secret guardian of thought, and it holds within its walls one of the most beautiful Venuses in the world.

Some people cross continents to go on a pilgrimage to a miraculous shrine. As for me, I came here to pay my devotions to the Venus of Syracuse.

It was in the album of a traveller that I saw the picture of this sublime marble woman. It was she, probably, who induced me to take this trip. I dreamed of her, I spoke of her incessantly, long before seeing her.

I wandered through the town, which is built on an island and separated from the land by three walls, between which pass three arms of the sea. It is small, pretty, situated on the shores of the gulf, with gardens and walks that lead to the water.

Then we went to the Latomias, immense roofless excavations, which were originally stone quarries,

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but became prisons, where, for eight months after the defeat of Nicias, the captured Athenians were confined, tortured by hunger, thirst and the horrible heat of these caldrons, swarming with vermin, where they lay dying.

In one of these, the Latomia of Paradise, we noticed, at the end of a grotto, a peculiar opening, called the ear of Dionysius, who it is said came to listen at the hole, to hear the groanings of his victims. There are other versions, too. Certain ingenious learned men assert that this grotto, when put in communication with the theatre, was used as a subterranean hall for performances, to which it lent an echo that was prodigiously sonorous, for the slightest noises are surprisingly magnified.

The most remarkable of the Latomias is assuredly that of the Capuchins, an immense deep garden divided by vaults, arches and enormous rocks and enclosed in white cliffs.

We visited the Catacombs, whose area is five hundred acres. It was here that M. Cavalari found the most beautiful of all known Christian sarcophagi. We then entered the modest hotel, which overlooks the sea, and sat up late, idly watching the red and green lights of the ships in the harbor.

On entering the museum I saw her (the Venus) at the other end of the hall, and she was just as beautiful as I had imagined her.

She has no head and one of her arms is missing, but never has the human form appeared to me more admirable and enticing.

It is not a poetical woman, an idealized woman, nor is it a divine or majestic woman, like the Venus de Milo, but it is a real woman, a woman such as

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you love, such as you desire, a woman you would fain clasp in your arms.

She has a large frame, well-developed breasts, powerful hips, and rather heavy limbs; she is a carnal Venus, whom one pictures lying down as she stands erect before one's gaze. Her missing arm must have concealed her breasts; with the other one she is raising a drapery to cover up her mysterious charms, and does it with the most adorable grace. The whole attitude of the body is conceived and executed to show the grace of this movement; the lines all seem to concentrate here. This simple and natural gesture, full of modesty and of suggestiveness at the same time, both hiding and revealing, attracting and concealing, seems to define, in truth, the attitude of the feminine sex upon earth.

And the marble itself seems to live. One would like to touch it, so convinced one is that it would give under pressure like living flesh.

The hips, especially, are inexpressibly beautiful. The curve of the feminine back, which undulates from neck to heels, is admirably expressed, in the contour of the shoulders, in the decreasing roundness of the limbs, in the slight curve of the instep, all the modulations of human grace.

A work of art is superior only when it is, at one and the same time, a symbol and the exact expression of the real.

The Venus of Syracuse is a woman, and is also a symbol of fleshly lust.

Before the head of the Joconda one is beset by I know not what enervating and mystical temptation of love. There are also women living whose eyes give us that dream of unrealizable and mysterious

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love. We seek to find in them something beyond what really exists, because they seem to embody something of the intangible ideal. We continue to pursue it, behind all the surprises of the beauty which seems to contain intelligence, in the depth of glances that are only shades of blue, in the charm of smiles that come from the curve of the lips and a flash of ivory, or in the grace of an attitude born of chance and of the harmony of the lines of the figure, but without ever attaining it.

In this way have poets forever been tortured by the thirst of a mystical love. The natural exaltation of a poetic soul, aggravated by artistic enthusiasm, impels these chosen ones to conceive of a sort of vaporous love, frantically tender, ecstatic, never satiated, sensual without being carnal, so delicate that a breath will cause it to vanish, unrealizable and superhuman. And these poets are, perhaps, the only men who never have really loved a woman, a real woman of flesh and blood, with her womanly qualities and defects, her limited and charming mind, her feminine nerves, and her disquieting femininity.

Any creature that causes a dreamy exaltation on their part is to them the symbol of a mysterious but enchanted being: the being of whom they sing, true glorifiers of illusions that they are. This living being whom they worship is somewhat like a painted statue, the image of a god before whom people kneel. Where is this God? Who is this God? In what part of the heavens does this Unknown live, whom they have all worshipped, these unthinking ones, each and every one of them? As soon as they touch a hand responding to their pressure, their soul

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takes flight in a visionary dream, far from the carnal reality.

The woman they clasp is transformed, perfected, or disfigured by their poetical art. It is not her lips they kiss, but the lips they have dreamed of. Their glance does not lose itself in the depths of her blue or black eyes, but in the great unattainable unknown, the goal of all their dreams. The eye of their mistress is only the window pane through which they attempt to catch a glimpse of the paradise of ideal love.

But if some bewitching women can give our souls this rare illusion, others again only excite in us the impetuous love by which the race is perpetuated.

The Venus of Syracuse is the perfect expression of this powerful, wholesome and simple beauty. This admirable torso, in Parian marble, is, we are told, the Venus Callipygus, described by Athenæus and Lampridius, which was given by Heliogabalus to the people of Syracuse.

It has no head! What difference does it make? Its symbol is only the more complete. It is a woman's body that expresses all the real poetry of a caress.

Schopenhauer has said that nature, wishing to perpetuate the species, has made a snare of reproduction.

This marble figure, seen in Syracuse, is truly the human snare divined by the ancient artist, the woman who conceals and reveals the disquieting mystery of life.

Is it a snare? More's the pity! It attracts the lips, the touch of the hand, giving to kisses the pal-

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pable reality of white and yielding flesh, so firm and rounded and delightful to clasp.

It is divine, not because it expresses a thought, but simply because it is beautiful.

And one recalls, also, on beholding her, the bronze ram of Syracuse, the most beautiful piece of statuary in the museum of Palermo, which seems to be the embodiment of the whole world's animality. The powerful beast is lying down, his legs bent under him, the head slightly turned to the left. You would take this animal's head for that of a god, a bestial god, carnal and superb. The forehead is broad with curly hair, the eyes are set wide apart, the nose is long, well rounded and thick, with short hair and a remarkably brutish expression. The horns, which turn backwards, are twisted and curved, with their sharp points standing out from the thin ears, which also somewhat resemble horns. And the animal's glance impresses you with its stupid, disquieting and hard look. We feel as if in the presence of a wild animal on approaching this bronze.

On leaving the museum I gave one more loving look toward the marble figure, a look such as we give the beloved one at parting, and I immediately embarked to go and pay my respects to the papyrus of the River Anapo, as all writers should do.

We crossed the gulf from one bank to the other, and on the flat and bare shore we saw the mouth of a tiny river, where the boat entered.

The current was strong and hard to pull against. Sometimes the men were obliged to row, and at others to use the boat hook, to make us glide over the water, which ran rapidly between banks covered

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with small, bright, yellow flowers—two banks of gold.

Here were reeds, which rustled as we touched them, which bent and rose, and there, with their roots in water, were deep blue irises, on which fluttered innumerable dragonflies with glassy wings like mother of pearl, and quivering. Some of these flies were almost as large as humming-birds. And now, on the two banks that enclosed us, grew giant thistles and immense bindweed, weaving together the plants of the land and the reeds of the stream.

Beneath us, at the bottom of the water, was a forest of tall, waving grasses which moved about, floated, and looked as if they were swimming in the current that forever tossed them about.

Then the River Anapo separated from the ancient Cyaneus, its tributary, and we still punted along between the two banks. The stream wound in and out, amid blooming and enchanting perspectives. An island loomed up finally, covered with strange bushes. The frail and triangular stems, eight or nine feet high, bore at the top round tufts of green threads that were long, soft, flexible like human hair. They gave one the impression of human heads turned into plants, which might have been thrown into this sacred stream by one of the pagan deities who lived here in days gone by. And this was the ancient papyrus.

The peasants call this reed "parruca."

And in the distance you may see many more, a whole forest of them. They quiver, rustle, bend in every direction; their hairy heads become entangled, and they always look as if they were speaking about unknown and far-away things.

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Is it not strange that this wonderful plant, which brought down to us the thoughts of the dead, which preserved for us the fruits of human genius, should bear on its slender body of a shrub an enormous mane of thick and flowing hair, such as is worn by the poets of to-day?

We returned to Syracuse as the sun was about to set, and we gazed at the steamer, just arrived, which was to carry us away that very night toward Africa.

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THE small engine attached to the Neuilly steam-tram whistled as it passed the *Porte Maillot* to warn all obstacles to get out of its way and puffed like a person out of breath as it sent out its steam, its pistons moving rapidly with a noise as of iron legs running. The train was going along the broad avenue that ends at the Seine. The sultry heat at the close of a July day lay over the whole city, and from the road, although there was not a breath of wind stirring, there arose a white, chalky, suffocating, warm dust, which adhered to the moist skin, filled the eyes and got into the lungs. People stood in the doorways of their houses to try and get a breath of air.

The windows of the steam-tram were open and the curtains fluttered in the wind. There were very few passengers inside, because on warm days people preferred the outside or the platforms. They consisted of stout women in peculiar costumes, of those shopkeepers' wives from the suburbs, who made up for the distinguished looks which they did not possess by ill-assumed dignity; of men tired from office-work, with yellow faces, stooped shoulders, and with one shoulder higher than the other, in consequence of their long hours of writing at a desk. Their uneasy and melancholy faces also spoke of domestic troubles, of constant want of money, dis-

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appointed hopes, for they all belonged to the army of poor, threadbare devils who vegetate economically in cheap, plastered houses with a tiny piece of neglected garden on the outskirts of Paris, in the midst of those fields where night soil is deposited.

A short, corpulent man, with a puffy face, dressed all in black and wearing a decoration in his button-hole, was talking to a tall, thin man, dressed in a dirty, white linen suit, the coat all unbuttoned, with a white Panama hat on his head. The former spoke so slowly and hesitatingly that it occasionally almost seemed as if he stammered; he was Monsieur Caravan, chief clerk in the Admiralty. The other, who had formerly been surgeon on board a merchant ship, had set up in practice in Courbevoie, where he applied the vague remnants of medical knowledge which he had retained after an adventurous life, to the wretched population of that district. His name was Chenet, and strange rumors were current as to his morality.

Monsieur Caravan had always led the normal life of a man in a Government office. For the last thirty years he had invariably gone the same way to his office every morning, and had met the same men going to business at the same time, and nearly on the same spot, and he returned home every evening by the same road, and again met the same faces which he had seen growing old. Every morning, after buying his penny paper at the corner of the *Faubourg Saint Honoré*, he bought two rolls, and then went to his office, like a culprit who is giving himself up to justice, and got to his desk as quickly as possible, always feeling uneasy, as though he were expecting

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a rebuke for some neglect of duty of which he might have been guilty.

Nothing had ever occurred to change the monotonous order of his existence, for no event affected him except the work of his office, perquisites, gratuities, and promotion. He never spoke of anything but of his duties, either at the office, or at home—he had married the portionless daughter of one of his colleagues. His mind, which was in a state of atrophy from his depressing daily work, had no other thoughts, hopes or dreams than such as related to the office, and there was a constant source of bitterness that spoilt every pleasure that he might have had, and that was the employment of so many naval officials, *tinsmiths*, as they were called because of their silver-lace, as first-class clerks; and every evening at dinner he discussed the matter hotly with his wife, who shared his angry feelings, and proved to their own satisfaction that it was in every way unjust to give places in Paris to men who ought properly to have been employed in the navy.

He was old now, and had scarcely noticed how his life was passing, for school had merely been exchanged for the office without any intermediate transition, and the ushers, at whom he had formerly trembled, were replaced by his chiefs, of whom he was terribly afraid. When he had to go into the rooms of these official despots, it made him tremble from head to foot, and that constant fear had given him a very awkward manner in their presence, a humble demeanor, and a kind of nervous stammering.

He knew nothing more about Paris than a blind man might know who was led to the same spot by

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his dog every day; and if he read the account of any uncommon events or scandals in his penny paper, they appeared to him like fantastic tales, which some pressman had made up out of his own head, in order to amuse the inferior *employés*. He did not read the political news, which his paper frequently altered as the cause which subsidized it might require, for he was not fond of innovations, and when he went through the Avenue of the *Champs-Élysées* every evening, he looked at the surging crowd of pedestrians, and at the stream of carriages, as a traveller might who has lost his way in a strange country.

As he had completed his thirty years of obligatory service that year, on the first of January, he had had the cross of the *Legion of Honor* bestowed upon him, which, in the semi-military public offices, is a recompense for the miserable slavery—the official phrase is, *loyal services*—of unfortunate convicts who are riveted to their desk. That unexpected dignity gave him a high and new idea of his own capacities, and altogether changed him. He immediately left off wearing light trousers and fancy waistcoats, and wore black trousers and long coats, on which his *ribbon*, which was very broad, showed off better. He got shaved every morning, manicured his nails more carefully, changed his linen every two days, from a legitimate sense of what was proper, and out of respect for the national *Order*, of which he formed a part, and from that day he was another Caravan, scrupulously clean, majestic and condescending.

At home, he said, "my cross," at every moment, and he had become so proud of it, that he could not

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bear to see men wearing any other ribbon in their button-holes. He became especially angry on seeing strange orders:—"Which nobody ought to be allowed to wear in France," and he bore Chenet a particular grudge, as he met him on a tram-car every evening, wearing a decoration of one kind or another, white, blue, orange, or green.

The conversation of the two men, from the *Arc de Triomphe* to Neuilly, was always the same, and on that day they discussed, first of all, various local abuses which disgusted them both, and the Mayor of Neuilly received his full share of their censure. Then, as invariably happens in the company of a medical man, Caravan began to enlarge on the chapter of illness, as, in that manner, he hoped to obtain a little gratuitous advice, if he was careful not to show his hand. His mother had been causing him no little anxiety for some time; she had frequent and prolonged fainting fits, and, although she was ninety, she would not take care of herself.

Caravan grew quite tender-hearted when he mentioned her great age, and more than once asked Doctor Chenet, emphasizing the word *doctor*—although he was not fully qualified, being only an *Officier de Santé*—whether he had often met anyone as old as that. And he rubbed his hands with pleasure; not, perhaps, that he cared very much about seeing the good woman last forever here on earth, but because the long duration of his mother's life was, as it were an earnest of old age for himself, and he continued:

"In my family, we last long, and I am sure that, unless I meet with an accident, I shall not die until I am very old."

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The *doctor* looked at him with pity, and glanced for a moment at his neighbor's red face, his short, thick neck, his "corporation," as Chenet called it to himself, his two fat, flabby legs, and the apoplectic rotundity of the old official; and raising the white Panama hat from his head, he said with a snigger:

"I am not so sure of that, old fellow; your mother is as tough as nails, and I should say that your life is not a very good one."

This rather upset Caravan, who did not speak again until the tram put them down at their destination, where the two friends got out, and Chenet asked his friend to have a glass of vermouth at the *Café du Globe*, opposite, which both of them were in the habit of frequenting. The proprietor, who was a friend of theirs, held out to them two fingers, which they shook across the bottles of the counter; and then they joined three of their friends, who were playing dominoes, and who had been there since midday. They exchanged cordial greetings, with the usual question: "Anything new?" And then the three players continued their game, and held out their hands without looking up, when the others wished them "Good-night," and then they both went home to dinner.

Caravan lived in a small two-story house in Courbevoie, near where the roads meet; the ground floor was occupied by a hair-dresser. Two bedrooms, a dining-room and a kitchen, formed the whole of their apartments, and Madame Caravan spent nearly her whole time in cleaning them up, while her daughter, Marie-Louise, who was twelve, and her son, Phillip-Auguste, were running about

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with all the little, dirty, mischievous brats of the neighborhood, and playing in the gutter.

Caravan had installed his mother, whose avarice was notorious in the neighborhood, and who was terribly thin, in the room above them. She was always cross, and she never passed a day without quarreling and flying into furious tempers. She would apostrophize the neighbors, who were standing at their own doors, the coster-mongers, the street-sweepers, and the street-boys, in the most violent language; and the latter, to have their revenge, used to follow her at a distance when she went out, and call out rude things after her.

A little servant from Normandy, who was incredibly giddy and thoughtless, performed the household work, and slept on the second floor in the same room as the old woman, for fear of anything happening to her in the night.

When Caravan got in, his wife, who suffered from a chronic passion for cleaning, was polishing up the mahogany chairs that were scattered about the room with a piece of flannel. She always wore cotton gloves, and adorned her head with a cap ornamented with many colored ribbons, which was always tilted over one ear; and whenever anyone caught her polishing, sweeping, or washing, she used to say:

"I am not rich; everything is very simple in my house, but cleanliness is my luxury, and that is worth quite as much as any other."

As she was gifted with sound, obstinate, practical common sense, she led her husband in everything. Every evening during dinner, and afterwards when they were in their room, they talked over the business of the office for a long time, and although she

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was twenty years younger than he was, he confided everything to her as if she took the lead, and followed her advice in every matter.

She had never been pretty, and now she had grown ugly; in addition to that, she was short and thin, while her careless and tasteless way of dressing herself concealed her few small feminine attractions, which might have been brought out if she had possessed any taste in dress. Her skirts were always awry, and she frequently scratched herself, no matter on what part of her person, totally indifferent as to who might see her, and so persistently, that anyone who saw her might think that she was suffering from something like the itch. The only adornments that she allowed herself were silk ribbons, which she had in great profusion, and of various colors mixed together, in the pretentious caps which she wore at home.

As soon as she saw her husband she rose and said, as she kissed his whiskers:

"Did you remember Potin, my dear?"

He fell into a chair, in consternation, for that was the fourth time on which he had forgotten a commission that he had promised to do for her.

"It is a fatality," he said; "it is no good for me to think of it all day long, for I am sure to forget it in the evening."

But as he seemed really so very sorry, she merely said, quietly:

"You will think of it to-morrow, I dare say. Anything new at the office?"

"Yes, a great piece of news; another tinsmith has been appointed second chief clerk." She became very serious, and said:

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"So he succeeds Ramon; this was the very post that I wanted you to have. And what about Ramon?"

"He retires on his pension."

She became furious, her cap slid down on her shoulder, and she continued:

"There is nothing more to be done in that shop now. And what is the name of the new commissioner?"

"Bonassot."

She took up the *Naval Year Book*, which she always kept close at hand, and looked him up.

"'Bonassot—Toulon. Born in 1851. Student-Commissioner in 1871. Sub-Commissioner in 1875.' Has he been to sea?" she continued. At that question Caravan's looks cleared up, and he laughed until his sides shook.

"As much as Balin—as much as Balin, his chief." And he added an old office joke, and laughed more than ever:

"It would not even do to send them by water to inspect the *Point-du-Jour*, for they would be sick on the penny steamboats on the Seine."

But she remained as serious as if she had not heard him, and then she said in a low voice, as she scratched her chin:

"If we only had a Deputy to fall back upon. When the Chamber hears everything that is going on at the Admiralty, the Minister will be turned out——"

She was interrupted by a terrible noise on the stairs. Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who had just come in from the gutter, were slapping each other all the way upstairs. Their mother rushed at

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them furiously, and taking each of them by an arm, she dragged them into the room, shaking them vigorously; but as soon as they saw their father, they rushed up to him, and he kissed them affectionately, and taking one of them on each knee, began to talk to them.

Philippe-Auguste was an ugly, ill-kempt little brat, dirty from head to foot, with the face of an idiot, and Marie-Louise was already like her mother—spoke like her, repeated her words, and even imitated her movements. She also asked him whether there was anything fresh at the office, and he replied merrily:

“Your friend, Ramon, who comes and dines here every Sunday, is going to leave us, little one. There is a new second head-clerk.”

She looked at her father, and with a precocious child’s pity, she said:

“Another man has been put over your head again!”

He stopped laughing, and did not reply, and in order to create a diversion, he said, addressing his wife, who was cleaning the windows:

“How is mamma, upstairs?”

Madame Caravan left off rubbing, turned round, pulled her cap up, as it had fallen quite on to her back, and said with trembling lips:

“Ah! yes; let us talk about your mother, for she has made a pretty scene. Just imagine: a short time ago Madame Lebaudin, the hairdresser’s wife, came upstairs to borrow a packet of starch of me, and, as I was not at home, your mother chased her out as though she were a beggar; but I gave it to the old woman. She pretended not to hear, as she always

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does when one tells her unpleasant truths, but she is no more deaf than I am, as you know. It is all a sham, and the proof of it is, that she went up to her own room immediately, without saying a word."

Caravan, embarrassed, did not utter a word, and at that moment the little servant came in to announce dinner. In order to let his mother know, he took a broom-handle, which always stood in a corner, and rapped loudly on the ceiling three times, and then they went into the dining-room. Madame Caravan, junior, helped the soup, and waited for the old woman, but she did not come, and as the soup was getting cold, they began to eat slowly, and when their plates were empty, they waited again, and Madame Caravan, who was furious, attacked her husband:

"She does it on purpose, you know that as well as I do. But you always uphold her."

Not knowing which side to take, he sent Marie-Louise to fetch her grandmother, and he sat motionless, with his eyes cast down, while his wife tapped her glass angrily with her knife. In about a minute, the door flew open suddenly, and the child came in again, out of breath and very pale, and said hurriedly:

"Grandmamma has fallen on the floor."

Caravan jumped up, threw his table-napkin down, and rushed upstairs, while his wife, who thought it was some trick of her mother-in-law's, followed more slowly, shrugging her shoulders, as if to express her doubt. When they got upstairs, however, they found the old woman lying at full length in the middle of the room, and when they turned her over,

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they saw that she was insensible and motionless, while her skin looked more wrinkled and yellow than usual, her eyes were closed, her teeth clenched, and her thin body was stiff.

Caravan knelt down by her, and began to moan.

"My poor mother! my poor mother!" he said. But the other Madame Caravan said:

"Bah! She has only fainted again, that is all, and she has done it to prevent us from dining comfortably, you may be sure of that."

They put her on the bed, undressed her completely, and Caravan, his wife, and the servant began to rub her; but, in spite of their efforts, she did not recover consciousness, so they sent Rosalie, the servant, to fetch *Doctor Chenet*. He lived a long way off, on the quay, going towards Suresnes, and so it was a considerable time before he arrived. He came at last, however, and, after having looked at the old woman, felt her pulse, and listened for a heart beat, he said: "It is all over."

Caravan threw himself on the body, sobbing violently; he kissed his mother's rigid face, and wept so that great tears fell on the dead woman's face like drops of water, and, naturally, Madame Caravan, junior, showed a decorous amount of grief, and uttered feeble moans as she stood behind her husband, while she rubbed her eyes vigorously.

But, suddenly, Caravan raised himself up, with his thin hair in disorder, and, looking very ugly in his grief, said:

"But—are you sure, doctor? Are you quite sure?"

The doctor stooped over the body, and, handling

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it with professional dexterity, as a shopkeeper might do, when showing off his goods, he said:

"See, my dear friend, look at her eye."

He raised the eyelid, and the old woman's eye appeared altogether unaltered, unless, perhaps, the pupil was rather larger, and Caravan felt a severe shock at the sight. Then Monsieur Chenet took her thin arm, forced the fingers open, and said, angrily, as if he had been contradicted:

"Just look at her hand; I never make a mistake, you may be quite sure of that."

Caravan fell on the bed, and almost bellowed, while his wife, still whimpering, did what was necessary.

She brought the night-table, on which she spread a towel and placed four wax candles on it, which she lighted; then she took a sprig of box, which was hanging over the chimney glass, and put it between the four candles, in a plate, which she filled with clean water, as she had no holy water. But, after a moment's rapid reflection, she threw a pinch of salt into the water, no doubt thinking she was performing some sort of act of consecration by doing that, and when she had finished, she remained standing motionless, and the doctor, who had been helping her, whispered to her:

"We must take Caravan away."

She nodded assent, and, going up to her husband, who was still on his knees, sobbing, she raised him up by one arm, while Chenet took him by the other.

They put him into a chair, and his wife kissed his forehead, and then began to lecture him. Chenet enforced her words, and preached firmness, courage, and resignation—the very things which are always

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wanting in such overwhelming misfortunes—and then both of them took him by the arms again and led him out.

He was crying like a great child, with convulsive sobs; his arms hanging down, and his legs weak, and he went downstairs without knowing what he was doing, and moving his feet mechanically. They put him into the chair which he always occupied at dinner, in front of his empty soup plate. And there he sat, without moving, his eyes fixed on his glass, and so stupefied with grief, that he could not even think.

In a corner, Madame Caravan was talking with the doctor and asking what the necessary formalities were, as she wanted to obtain practical information. At last, Monsieur Chenet, who appeared to be waiting for something, took up his hat and prepared to go, saying that he had not dined yet; whereupon she exclaimed:

"What! you have not dined? Why, stay here, doctor; don't go. You shall have whatever we have, for, of course, you understand that we do not fare sumptuously." He made excuses and refused, but she persisted, and said:

"You really must stay; at times like this, people like to have friends near them, and, besides that, perhaps you will be able to persuade my husband to take some nourishment; he must keep up his strength."

The doctor bowed, and, putting down his hat, he said:

"In that case, I will accept your invitation, madame."

She gave Rosalie, who seemed to have lost her

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head, some orders, and then sat down, "to pretend to eat," as she said, "to keep the doctor company."

The soup was brought in again, and Monsieur Chenet took two helpings. Then there came a dish of tripe, which exhaled a smell of onions, and which Madame Caravan made up her mind to taste.

"It is excellent," the doctor said, at which she smiled, and, turning to her husband, she said:

"Do take a little, my poor Alfred, only just to put something in your stomach. Remember that you have got to pass the night watching by her!"

He held out his plate, docilely, just as he would have gone to bed, if he had been told to, obeying her in everything, without resistance and without reflection, and he ate; the doctor helped himself three times, while Madame Caravan, from time to time, fished out a large piece at the end of her fork, and swallowed it with a sort of studied indifference.

When a salad bowl full of macaroni was brought in, the doctor said:

"By Jove! That is what I am very fond of." And this time, Madame Caravan helped everybody. She even filled the saucers that were being scraped by the children, who, being left to themselves, had been drinking wine without any water, and were now kicking each other under the table.

Chenet remembered that Rossini, the composer, had been very fond of that Italian dish, and suddenly he exclaimed:

"Why! that rhymes, and one could begin some lines like this:

*The Maestro Rossini
Was fond of macaroni."*

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Nobody listened to him, however. Madame Caravan, who had suddenly grown thoughtful, was thinking of all the probable consequences of the event, while her husband made bread pellets, which he put on the table-cloth, and looked at with a fixed, idiotic stare. As he was devoured by thirst, he was continually raising his glass full of wine to his lips, and the consequence was that his mind, which had been upset by the shock and grief, seemed to become vague, and his ideas danced about as digestion commenced.

The doctor, who, meanwhile, had been drinking away steadily, was getting visibly drunk, and Madame Caravan herself felt the reaction which follows all nervous shocks, and was agitated and excited, and, although she had drunk nothing but water, her head felt rather confused.

Presently, Chenet began to relate stories of death that appeared comical to him. For in that suburb of Paris, that is full of people from the provinces, one finds that indifference towards death which all peasants show, were it even their own father or mother; that want of respect, that unconscious brutality which is so common in the country, and so rare in Paris, and he said:

"Why, I was sent for last week to the *Rue du Puteaux*, and when I went, I found the patient dead, and the whole family calmly sitting beside the bed finishing a bottle of aniseed cordial, which had been bought the night before to satisfy the dying man's fancy."

But Madame Caravan was not listening; she was continually thinking of the inheritance, and Caravan was incapable of understanding anything further.

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Coffee was presently served, and it had been made very strong to give them courage. As every cup was well flavored with cognac, it made all their faces red, and confused their ideas still more. To make matters still worse, Chenet suddenly seized the brandy bottle and poured out "a drop for each of them just to wash their mouths out with," as he termed it, and then, without speaking any more, overcome in spite of themselves, by that feeling of animal comfort which alcohol affords after dinner, they slowly sipped the sweet cognac, which formed a yellowish syrup at the bottom of their cups.

The children had fallen asleep, and Rosalie carried them off to bed. Caravan, mechanically obeying that wish to forget oneself which possesses all unhappy persons, helped himself to brandy again several times, and his dull eyes grew bright. At last the doctor rose to go, and seizing his friend's arm, he said:

"Come with me; a little fresh air will do you good. When one is in trouble, one must not remain in one spot."

The other obeyed mechanically, put on his hat, took his stick, and went out, and both of them walked arm-in-arm towards the Seine, in the starlight night.

The air was warm and sweet, for all the gardens in the neighborhood were full of flowers at this season of the year, and their fragrance, which is scarcely perceptible during the day, seemed to awaken at the approach of night, and mingled with the light breezes which blew upon them in the darkness.

The broad avenue, with its two rows of gas-

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lamps, that extended as far as the *Arc de Triomphe*, was deserted and silent, but there was the distant roar of Paris, which seemed to have a reddish vapor hanging over it. It was a kind of continual rumbling, which was at times answered by the whistle of a train in the distance, travelling at full speed to the ocean, through the provinces.

The fresh air on the faces of the two men rather overcame them at first, made the doctor lose his equilibrium a little, and increased Caravan's giddiness, from which he had suffered since dinner. He walked as if he were in a dream; his thoughts were paralyzed, although he felt no great grief, for he was in a state of mental torpor that prevented him from suffering, and he even felt a sense of relief which was increased by the mildness of the night.

When they reached the bridge, they turned to the right, and got the fresh breeze from the river, which rolled along, calm and melancholy, bordered by tall poplar trees, while the stars looked as if they were floating on the water and were moving with the current. A slight white mist that floated over the opposite banks, filled their lungs with a sensation of cold, and Caravan stopped suddenly, for he was struck by that smell from the water which brought back old memories to his mind. For, in his mind, he suddenly saw his mother again, in Picardy, as he had seen her years before, kneeling in front of their door, and washing the heaps of linen at her side in the stream that ran through their garden. He almost fancied that he could hear the sound of the wooden paddle with which she beat the linen in the calm silence of the country, and her voice, as she called out to him: "Alfred, bring me some soap." And

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he smelled that odor of running water, of the mist rising from the wet ground, that marshy smeli, which he should never forget, and which came back to him on this very evening on which his mother had died.

He stopped, seized with a feeling of despair. A sudden flash seemed to reveal to him the extent of his calamity, and that breath from the river plunged him into an abyss of hopeless grief. His life seemed cut in half, his youth disappeared, swallowed up by that death. All the *former days* were over and done with, all the recollections of his youth had been swept away; for the future, there would be nobody to talk to him of what had happened in days gone by, of the people he had known of old, of his own part of the country, and of his past life; that was a part of his existence which existed no longer, and the rest might as well end now.

And then he saw "the mother" as she was when young, wearing well-worn dresses, which he remembered for such a long time that they seemed inseparable from her; he recollected her movements, the different tones of her voice, her habits, her predilections, her fits of anger, the wrinkles on her face, the movements of her thin fingers, and all her well-known attitudes, which she would never have again, and clutching hold of the doctor, he began to moan and weep. His thin legs began to tremble, his whole stout body was shaken by his sobs, all he could say was:

"My mother, my poor mother, my poor mother!"

But his companion, who was still drunk, and who intended to finish the evening in certain places of

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bad repute that he frequented secretly, made him sit down on the grass by the riverside, and left him almost immediately, under the pretext that he had to see a patient.

Caravan went on crying for some time, and when he had got to the end of his tears, when his grief had, so to say, run out, he again felt relief, repose and sudden tranquillity.

The moon had risen, and bathed the horizon in its soft light.

The tall poplar trees had a silvery sheen on them, and the mist on the plain looked like drifting snow; the river, in which the stars were reflected, and which had a sheen as of mother-of-pearl, was gently rippled by the wind. The air was soft and sweet, and Caravan inhaled it almost greedily, and thought that he could perceive a feeling of freshness, of calm and of superhuman consolation pervading him.

He actually resisted that feeling of comfort and relief, and kept on saying to himself: "My poor mother, my poor mother!" and tried to make himself cry, from a kind of conscientious feeling; but he could not succeed in doing so any longer, and those sad thoughts, which had made him sob so bitterly a short time before, had almost passed away. In a few moments, he rose to go home, and returned slowly, under the influence of that serene night, and with a heart soothed in spite of himself.

When he reached the bridge, he saw that the last tramcar was ready to start, and behind it were the brightly lighted windows of the *Café du Globe*. He felt a longing to tell somebody of his loss, to excite pity, to make himself interesting. He put on a woe-ful face, pushed open the door, and went up to the

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counter, where the landlord still was. He had counted on creating a sensation, and had hoped that everybody would get up and come to him with outstretched hands, and say: "Why, what is the matter with you?" But nobody noticed his disconsolate face, so he rested his two elbows on the counter, and, burying his face in his hands, he murmured: "Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

The landlord looked at him and said: "Are you ill, Monsieur Caravan?"

"No, my friend," he replied, "but my mother has just died."

"Ah!" the other exclaimed, and as a customer at the other end of the establishment asked for a glass of Bavarian beer, he went to attend to him, leaving Caravan dumfounded at his want of sympathy.

The three domino players were sitting at the same table which they had occupied before dinner, totally absorbed in their game, and Caravan went up to them, in search of pity, but as none of them appeared to notice him he made up his mind to speak.

"A great misfortune has happened to me since I was here," he said.

All three slightly raised their heads at the same instant, but keeping their eyes fixed on the pieces which they held in their hands.

"What do you say?"

"My mother has just died"; whereupon one of them said:

"Oh! the devil," with that false air of sorrow which indifferent people assume. Another, who could not find anything to say, emitted a sort of

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sympathetic whistle, shaking his head at the same time, and the third turned to the game again, as if he were saying to himself: "Is that all!"

Caravan had expected some of these expressions that are said to "come from the heart," and when he saw how his news was received, he left the table, indignant at their calmness at their friend's sorrow, although this sorrow had stupefied him so that he scarcely felt it any longer. When he got home his wife was waiting for him in her nightgown, and sitting in a low chair by the open window, still thinking of the inheritance.

"Undress yourself," she said; "we can go on talking."

He raised his head, and looking at the ceiling, said:

"But—there is nobody upstairs."

"I beg your pardon, Rosalie is with her, and you can go and take her place at three o'clock in the morning, when you have had some sleep."

He only partially undressed, however, so as to be ready for anything that might happen, and after tying a silk handkerchief round his head, he lay down to rest, and for some time neither of them spoke. Madame Caravan was thinking.

Her nightcap was adorned with a red bow, and was pushed rather to one side, as was the way with all the caps she wore, and presently she turned towards him and said:

"Do you know whether your mother made a will?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I—I do not think so. No, I am sure that she did not."

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His wife looked at him, and she said, in a low, angry tone:

"I call that infamous; here we have been wearing ourselves out for ten years in looking after her, and have boarded and lodged her! Your sister would not have done so much for her, nor I either, if I had known how I was to be rewarded! Yes, it is a disgrace to her memory! I dare say that you will tell me that she paid us, but one cannot pay one's children in ready money for what they do; that obligation is recognized after death; at any rate, that is how honorable people act. So I have had all my worry and trouble for nothing! Oh, that is nice! that is very nice!"

Poor Caravan, who was almost distracted, kept on repeating:

"My dear, my dear, please, please be quiet."

She grew calmer by degrees, and, resuming her usual voice and manner, she continued:

"We must let your sister know to-morrow."

He started, and said:

"Of course we must; I had forgotten all about it; I will send her a telegram the first thing in the morning."

"No," she replied, like a woman who had foreseen everything; "no, do not send it before ten or eleven o'clock, so that we may have time to turn round before she comes. It does not take more than two hours to get here from Charenton, and we can say that you lost your head from grief. If we let her know in the course of the day, that will be soon enough, and will give us time to look round."

Caravan put his hand to his forehead, and, in the same timid voice in which he always spoke of his

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chief, the very thought of whom made him tremble, he said:

"I must let them know at the office."

"Why?" she replied. "On occasions like this, it is always excusable to forget. Take my advice, and don't let him know; your chief will not be able to say anything to you, and you will put him in a nice fix."

"Oh! yes, that I shall, and he will be in a terrible rage, too, when he notices my absence. Yes, you are right; it is a capital idea, and when I tell him that my mother is dead, he will be obliged to hold his tongue."

And he rubbed his hands in delight at the joke, when he thought of his chief's face; while upstairs lay the body of the dead old woman, with the servant asleep beside it.

But Madame Caravan grew thoughtful, as if she were preoccupied by something which she did not care to mention, and at last she said:

"Your mother had given you her clock, had she not—the girl playing at cup and ball?"

He thought for a moment, and then replied:

"Yes, yes; she said to me (but it was a long time ago, when she first came here): 'I shall leave the clock to you, if you look after me well.'"

Madame Caravan was reassured, and regained her serenity, and said:

"Well, then, you must go and fetch it out of her room, for if we get your sister here, she will prevent us from taking it."

He hesitated.

"Do you think so?"

That made her angry.

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"I certainly think so; once it is in our possession, she will know nothing at all about where it came from; it belongs to us. It is just the same with the chest of drawers with the marble top, that is in her room; she gave it me one day when she was in a good temper. We will bring it down at the same time."

Caravan, however, seemed incredulous, and said: "But, my dear, it is a great responsibility!"

She turned on him furiously.

"Oh! Indeed! Will you never change? You would let your children die of hunger, rather than make a move. Does not that chest of drawers belong to us, as she gave it to me? And if your sister is not satisfied, let her tell me so, me! I don't care a straw for your sister. Come, get up, and we will bring down what your mother gave us, immediately."

Trembling and vanquished, he got out of bed and began to put on his trousers, but she stopped him:

"It is not worth while to dress yourself; your underwear is quite enough. I mean to go as I am."

They both left the room in their night clothes, went upstairs quite noiselessly, opened the door and went into the room, where the four lighted tapers and the plate with the sprig of box alone seemed to be watching the old woman in her rigid repose, for Rosalie, who was lying back in the easy chair with her legs stretched out, her hands folded in her lap, and her head on one side, was also quite motionless, and was snoring with her mouth wide open.

Caravan took the clock, which was one of those grotesque objects that were produced so plentifully under the Empire. A girl in gilt bronze was holding a cup and ball, and the ball formed the pendulum.

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"Give that to me," his wife said, "and take the marble slab off the chest of drawers."

He put the marble slab on his shoulder with considerable effort, and they left the room. Caravan had to stoop in the doorway, and trembled as he went downstairs, while his wife walked backwards, so as to light him, and held the candlestick in one hand, carrying the clock under the other arm.

When they were in their own room, she heaved a sigh.

"We have got over the worst part of the job," she said; "so now let us go and fetch the other things."

But the bureau drawers were full of the old woman's wearing apparel, which they must manage to hide somewhere, and Madame Caravan soon thought of a plan.

"Go and get that wooden packing case in the vestibule; it is hardly worth anything, and we may just as well put it here."

And when he had brought it upstairs they began to fill it. One by one they took out all the collars, cuffs, chemises, caps, all the well-worn things that had belonged to the poor woman lying there behind them, and arranged them methodically in the wooden box in such a manner as to deceive Madame Braux, the deceased woman's other child, who would be coming the next day.

When they had finished, they first of all carried the bureau drawers downstairs, and the remaining portion afterwards, each of them holding an end, and it was some time before they could make up their minds where it would stand best; but at last they decided upon their own room, opposite the bed, be-

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tween the two windows, and as soon as it was in its place Madame Caravan filled it with her own things. The clock was placed on the chimney-piece in the dining-room, and they looked to see what the effect was, and were both delighted with it and agreed that nothing could be better. Then they retired, she blew out the candle, and soon everybody in the house was asleep.

It was broad daylight when Caravan opened his eyes again. His mind was rather confused when he woke up, and he did not clearly remember what had happened for a few minutes; when he did, he felt a weight at his heart, and jumped out of bed, almost ready to cry again.

He hastened to the room overhead, where Rosalie was still sleeping in the same position as the night before, not having awakened once. He sent her to do her work, put fresh tapers in the place of those that had burnt out, and then he looked at his mother, revolving in his brain those apparently profound thoughts, those religious and philosophical common-places which trouble people of mediocre intelligence in the presence of death.

But, as his wife was calling him, he went downstairs. She had written out a list of what had to be done during the morning, and he was horrified when he saw the memorandum:

1. Report the death at the mayor's office.
2. See the doctor who had attended her.
3. Order the coffin.
4. Give notice at the church.
5. Go to the undertaker.
6. Order the notices of her death at the printer's.
7. Go to the lawyer.

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8. Telegraph the news to all the family.

Besides all this, there were a number of small commissions; so he took his hat and went out. As the news had spread abroad, Madame Caravan's female friends and neighbors soon began to come in and begged to be allowed to see the body. There had been a scene between husband and wife at the hair-dresser's on the ground floor about the matter, while a customer was being shaved. The wife, who was knitting steadily, said: "Well, there is one less, and as great a miser as one ever meets with. I certainly did not care for her; but, nevertheless, I must go and have a look at her."

The husband, while lathering his *patient's* chin, said: "That is another queer fancy! Nobody but a woman would think of such a thing. It is not enough for them to worry you during life, but they cannot even leave you at peace when you are dead." But his wife, without being in the least disconcerted, replied: "The feeling is stronger that I am, and I must go. It has been on me since the morning. If I were not to see her, I should think about it all my life; but when I have had a good look at her, I shall be satisfied."

The knight of the razor shrugged his shoulders and remarked in a low voice to the gentleman whose cheek he was scraping: "I just ask you, what sort of ideas do you think these confounded females have? I should not amuse myself by going to see a corpse!" But his wife had heard him and replied very quietly: "But it is so, it is so." And then, putting her knitting on the counter, she went upstairs to the first floor, where she met two other neighbors, who had just come, and who were discussing the event with

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Madame Caravan, who was giving them the details, and they all went together to the death chamber. The four women went in softly, and, one after the other, sprinkled the bed clothes with the salt water, knelt down, made the sign of the cross while they mumbled a prayer. Then they rose from their knees and looked for some time at the corpse with round, wide-open eyes and mouths partly open, while the daughter-in-law of the dead woman, with her handkerchief to her face, pretended to be sobbing piteously.

When she turned about to walk away whom should she perceive standing close to the door but Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who were curiously taking stock of all that was going on. Then, forgetting her pretended grief, she threw herself upon them with uplifted hands, crying out in a furious voice, "Will you get out of this, you horrid brats!"

Ten minutes later, going upstairs again with another contingent of neighbors, she prayed, wept profusely, performed all her duties, and found once more her two children, who had followed her upstairs. She again boxed their ears soundly, but the next time she paid no heed to them, and at each fresh arrival of visitors the two urchins always followed in the wake, kneeling down in a corner and imitating slavishly everything they saw their mother do.

When the afternoon came the crowds of inquisitive people began to diminish, and soon there were no more visitors. Madame Caravan, returning to her own apartments, began to make the necessary preparations for the funeral ceremony, and the deceased was left alone.

The window of the room was open. A torrid heat

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entered, along with clouds of dust; the flames of the four candles were flickering beside the immobile corpse, and upon the cloth which covered the face, the closed eyes, the two stretched-out hands, small flies alighted, came, went and careered up and down incessantly, being the only companions of the old woman for the time being.

Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, however, had now left the house and were running up and down the street. They were soon surrounded by their playmates, by little girls especially, who were older and who were much more interested in all the mysteries of life, asking questions as if they were grown people.

"Then your grandmother is dead?" "Yes, she died yesterday evening." "What does a dead person look like?"

Then Marie began to explain, telling all about the candles, the sprig of box and the face of the corpse. It was not long before great curiosity was aroused in the minds of all the children, and they asked to be allowed to go upstairs to look at the departed.

Marie-Louise at once organized a first expedition, consisting of five girls and two boys—the biggest and the most courageous. She made them take off their shoes so that they might not be discovered. The troupe filed into the house and mounted the stairs as stealthily as an army of mice.

Once in the chamber, the little girl, imitating her mother, regulated the ceremony. She solemnly walked in advance of her comrades, went down on her knees, made the sign of the cross, moved her lips as in prayer, rose, sprinkled the bed, and while the children, all crowded together, were approaching—

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frightened and curious and eager to look at the face and hands of the deceased—she began suddenly to simulate sobbing and to bury her eyes in her little handkerchief. Then, becoming instantly consoled, on thinking of the other children who were downstairs waiting at the door, she ran downstairs followed by the rest, returning in a minute with another group, then a third; for all the little ragamuffins of the countryside, even to the little beggars in rags, had congregated in order to participate in this new pleasure; and each time she repeated her mother's grimaces with absolute perfection.

At length, however, she became tired. Some game or other drew the children away from the house, and the old grandmother was left alone, forgotten suddenly by everybody.

The room was growing dark, and upon the dry and rigid features of the corpse the fitful flames of the candles cast patches of light.

Towards 8 o'clock Caravan ascended to the chamber of death, closed the windows and renewed the candles. He was now quite composed on entering the room, accustomed already to regard the corpse as though it had been there for months. He even went the length of declaring that, as yet, there were no signs of decomposition, making this remark just at the moment when he and his wife were about to sit down at table. "Pshaw!" she responded, "she is now stark and stiff; she will keep for a year."

The soup was eaten in silence. The children, who had been left to themselves all day, now worn out by fatigue, were sleeping soundly on their chairs, and nobody ventured to break the silence.

Suddenly the flame of the lamp went down.

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Madame Caravan immediately turned up the wick, a hollow sound ensued, and the light went out. They had forgotten to buy oil. To send for it now to the grocer's would keep back the dinner, and they began to look for candles, but none were to be found except the tapers which had been placed upon the table upstairs in the death chamber.

Madame Caravan, always prompt in her decisions, quickly despatched Marie-Louise to fetch two, and her return was awaited in total darkness.

The footsteps of the girl who had ascended the stairs were distinctly heard. There was silence for a few seconds and then the child descended precipitately. She threw open the door and in a choking voice murmured: "Oh! papa, grandmamma is dressing herself!"

Caravan bounded to his feet with such precipitance that his chair fell over against the wall. He stammered out: "You say? . . . What are you saying?"

But Marie-Louise, gasping with emotion, repeated: "Grand—grand—grandmamma is putting on her clothes, she is coming downstairs."

Caravan rushed boldly up the staircase, followed by his wife, dumfounded; but he came to a standstill before the door of the second floor, overcome with terror, not daring to enter. What was he going to see? Madame Caravan, more courageous, turned the handle of the door and stepped forward into the room.

The old woman was standing up. In awakening from her lethargic sleep, before even regaining full consciousness, in turning upon her side and raising herself on her elbow, she had extinguished three of

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the candles which burned near the bed. Then, gaining strength, she got off the bed and began to look for her clothes. The absence of her chest of drawers had at first worried her, but, after a little, she had succeeded in finding her things at the bottom of the wooden box, and was now quietly dressing. She emptied the plateful of water, replaced the sprig of box behind the looking-glass, and arranged the chairs in their places, and was ready to go downstairs when there appeared before her her son and daughter-in-law.

Caravan rushed forward, seized her by the hands, embraced her with tears in his eyes, while his wife, who was behind him, repeated in a hypocritical tone of voice: "Oh, what a blessing! oh, what a blessing!"

But the old woman, without being at all moved, without even appearing to understand, rigid as a statue, and with glazed eyes, simply asked: "Will dinner soon be ready?"

He stammered out, not knowing what he said:

"Oh, yes, mother, we have been waiting for you."

And with an alacrity unusual in him, he took her arm, while Madame Caravan, the younger, seized the candle and lighted them downstairs, walking backwards in front of them, step by step, just as she had done the previous night for her husband, who was carrying the marble.

On reaching the first floor, she almost ran against people who were ascending the stairs. It was the Charenton family, Madame Braux, followed by her husband.

The wife, tall and stout, with a prominent stomach, opened wide her terrified eyes and was ready

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to make her escape. The husband, a socialist shoemaker, a little hairy man, the perfect image of a monkey, murmured quite unconcerned: "Well, what next? Is she resurrected?"

As soon as Madame Caravan recognized them, she made frantic gestures to them; then, speaking aloud, she said: "Why, here you are! What a pleasant surprise!"

But Madame Braux, dumfounded, understood nothing. She responded in a low voice: "It was your telegram that brought us; we thought that all was over."

Her husband, who was behind her, pinched her to make her keep silent. He added with a sly laugh, which his thick beard concealed: "It was very kind of you to invite us here. We set out post haste," which remark showed the hostility which had for a long time reigned between the households. Then, just as the old woman reached the last steps, he pushed forward quickly and rubbed his hairy face against her cheeks, shouting in her ear, on account of her deafness: "How well you look, mother; sturdy as usual, hey!"

Madame Braux, in her stupefaction at seeing the old woman alive, whom they all believed to be dead, dared not even embrace her; and her enormous bulk blocked up the passageway and hindered the others from advancing. The old woman, uneasy and suspicious, but without speaking, looked at everyone around her; and her little gray eyes, piercing and hard, fixed themselves now on one and now on the other, and they were so full of meaning that the children became frightened.

Caravan, to explain matters, said: "She has been

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somewhat ill, but she is better now; quite well, indeed, are you not, mother?"

Then the good woman, continuing to walk, replied in a husky voice, as though it came from a distance: "It was syncope. I heard you all the while."

An embarrassing silence followed. They entered the dining-room, and in a few minutes all sat down to an improvised dinner.

Only M. Braux had retained his self-possession. His gorilla features grinned wickedly, while he let fall some words of double meaning which painfully disconcerted everyone.

But the door bell kept ringing every second, and Rosalie, distracted, came to call Caravan, who rushed out, throwing down his napkin. His brother-in-law even asked him whether it was not one of his reception days, to which he stammered out in answer: "No, only a few packages; nothing more."

A parcel was brought in, which he began to open carelessly, and the mourning announcements with black borders appeared unexpectedly. Reddening up to the very eyes, he closed the package hurriedly and pushed it under his waistcoat.

His mother had not seen it! She was looking intently at her clock which stood on the mantel-piece, and the embarrassment increased in midst of a dead silence. Turning her wrinkled face towards her daughter, the old woman, in whose eyes gleamed malice, said: "On Monday you must take me away from here, so that I can see your little girl. I want so much to see her." Madame Braux, her features all beaming, exclaimed: "Yes, mother, that I will," while Madame Caravan, the younger, who had turned pale, was ready to faint with annoyance. The

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two men, however, gradually drifted into conversation and soon became embroiled in a political discussion. Braux maintained the most revolutionary and communistic doctrines, his eyes glowing, and gesticulating and throwing about his arms. "Property, sir," he said, "is a robbery perpetrated on the working classes; the land is the common property of every man; hereditary rights are an infamy and a disgrace." But here he suddenly stopped, looking as if he had just said something foolish, then added in softer tones: "But this is not the proper moment to discuss such things."

The door was opened and Dr. Chenet appeared. For a moment he seemed bewildered, but regaining his usual smirking expression of countenance, he jauntily approached the old woman and said: "Aha! mamma, you are better to-day. Oh! I never had any doubt but you would come round again; in fact, I said to myself as I was mounting the staircase, 'I have an idea that I shall find the old lady on her feet once more';" and as he patted her gently on the back: "Ah! she is as solid as the Pont-Neuf, she will bury us all; see if she does not."

He sat down, accepted the coffee that was offered him, and soon began to join in the conversation of the two men, backing up Braux, for he himself had been mixed up in the Commune.

The old woman, now feeling herself fatigued, wished to retire. Caravan rushed forward. She looked him steadily in the eye and said: "You, you must carry my clock and chest of drawers upstairs again without a moment's delay." "Yes, mamma," he replied, gasping; "yes, I will do so." The old

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woman then took the arm of her daughter and withdrew from the room. The two Caravans remained astounded, silent, plunged in the deepest despair, while Braux rubbed his hands and sipped his coffee gleefully.

Suddenly Madame Caravan, consumed with rage, rushed at him, exclaiming: "You are a thief, a footpad, a cur! I would spit in your face! I—I would——" She could find nothing further to say, suffocating as she was with rage, while he went on sipping his coffee with a smile.

His wife returning just then, Madame Caravan attacked her sister-in-law, and the two women—the one with her enormous bulk, the other epileptic and spare, with changed voices and trembling hands—flew at one another with words of abuse.

Chenet and Braux now interposed, and the latter, taking his better half by the shoulders, pushed her out of the door before him, shouting: "Go on, woman; you talk too much"; and the two were heard in the street quarrelling until they disappeared from sight.

M. Chenet also took his departure, leaving the Caravans alone, face to face. The husband fell back on his chair, and with the cold sweat standing out in beads on his temples, murmured: "What shall I say to my chief to-morrow?"

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RESEMBLING in appearance all the wooden hostelries of the High Alps situated at the foot of glaciers in the barren rocky gorges that intersect the summits of the mountains, the Inn of Schwarenbach serves as a resting place for travellers crossing the Gemmi Pass.

It remains open for six months in the year and is inhabited by the family of Jean Hauser; then, as soon as the snow begins to fall and to fill the valley so as to make the road down to Loèche impassable, the father and his three sons go away and leave the house in charge of the old guide, Gaspard Hari, with the young guide, Ulrich Kungsi, and Sam, the great mountain dog.

The two men and the dog remain till the spring in their snowy prison, with nothing before their eyes except the immense white slopes of the Balmhorn, surrounded by light, glistening summits, and are shut in, blocked up and buried by the snow which rises around them and which envelops, binds and crushes the little house, which lies piled on the roof, covering the windows and blocking up the door.

It was the day on which the Hauser family were going to return to Loèche, as winter was approaching, and the descent was becoming dangerous. Three mules started first, laden with baggage and led by

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the three sons. Then the mother, Jeanne Hauser, and her daughter Louise mounted a fourth mule and set off in their turn and the father followed them, accompanied by the two men in charge, who were to escort the family as far as the brow of the descent. First of all they passed round the small lake, which was now frozen over, at the bottom of the mass of rocks which stretched in front of the inn, and then they followed the valley, which was dominated on all sides by the snow-covered summits.

A ray of sunlight fell into that little white, glistening, frozen desert and illuminated it with a cold and dazzling flame. No living thing appeared among this ocean of mountains. There was no motion in this immeasurable solitude and no noise disturbed the profound silence.

By degrees the young guide, Ulrich Kungsi, a tall, long-legged Swiss, left old man Hauser and old Gaspard behind, in order to catch up the mule which bore the two women. The younger one looked at him as he approached and appeared to be calling him with her sad eyes. She was a young, fair-haired little peasant girl, whose milk-white cheeks and pale hair looked as if they had lost their color by their long abode amid the ice. When he had got up to the animal she was riding he put his hand on the crupper and relaxed his speed. Mother Hauser began to talk to him, enumerating with the minutest details all that he would have to attend to during the winter. It was the first time that he was going to stay up there, while old Hari had already spent fourteen winters amid the snow, at the inn of Schwarenbach.

Ulrich Kungsi listened, without appearing to un-

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derstand and looked incessantly at the girl. From time to time he replied: "Yes, Madame Hauser," but his thoughts seemed far away and his calm features remained unmoved.

They reached Lake Daube, whose broad, frozen surface extended to the end of the valley. On the right one saw the black, pointed, rocky summits of the Daubenhorn beside the enormous moraines of the Lömmern glacier, above which rose the Wildstrubel. As they approached the Gemmi pass, where the descent of Loèche begins, they suddenly beheld the immense horizon of the Alps of the Valais, from which the broad, deep valley of the Rhone separated them.

In the distance there was a group of white, unequal, flat, or pointed mountain summits, which glistened in the sun; the Mischabel with its two peaks, the huge group of the Weisshorn, the heavy Brunegghorn, the lofty and formidable pyramid of Mount Cervin, that slayer of men, and the Dent-Blanche, that monstrous coquette.

Then beneath them, in a tremendous hole, at the bottom of a terrific abyss, they perceived Loèche, where houses looked as grains of sand which had been thrown into that enormous crevice that is ended and closed by the Gemmi and which opens, down below, on the Rhone.

The mule stopped at the edge of the path, which winds and turns continually, doubling backward, then, fantastically and strangely, along the side of the mountain as far as the almost invisible little village at its feet. The women jumped into the snow and the two old men joined them. "Well," father Hauser said, "good-by, and keep up your

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spirits till next year, my friends," and old Hari replied: "Till next year."

They embraced each other and then Madame Hauser in her turn offered her cheek, and the girl did the same.

When Ulrich Kungsi's turn came, he whispered in Louise's ear, "Do not forget those up yonder," and she replied, "No," in such a low voice that he guessed what she had said without hearing it. "Well, adieu," Jean Hauser repeated, "and don't fall ill." And going before the two women, he commenced the descent, and soon all three disappeared at the first turn in the road, while the two men returned to the inn at Schwarzenbach.

They walked slowly, side by side, without speaking. It was over, and they would be alone together for four or five months. Then Gaspard Hari began to relate his life last winter. He had remained with Michael Canol, who was too old now to stand it, for an accident might happen during that long solitude. They had not been dull, however; the only thing was to make up one's mind to it from the first, and in the end one would find plenty of distraction, games and other means of whiling away the time.

Ulrich Kungsi listened to him with his eyes on the ground, for in his thoughts he was following those who were descending to the village. They soon came in sight of the inn, which was, however, scarcely visible, so small did it look, a black speck at the foot of that enormous billow of snow, and when they opened the door Sam, the great curly dog, began to romp round them.

"Come, my boy," old Gaspard said, "we have no

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women now, so we must get our own dinner ready. Go and peel the potatoes." And they both sat down on wooden stools and began to prepare the soup.

The next morning seemed very long to Kunsì. Old Hari smoked and spat on the hearth, while the young man looked out of the window at the snow-covered mountain opposite the house.

In the afternoon he went out, and going over yesterday's ground again, he looked for the traces of the mule that had carried the two women. Then when he had reached the Gemmi Pass, he laid himself down on his stomach and looked at Loèche.

The village, in its rocky pit, was not yet buried under the snow, from which it was sheltered by the pine woods which protected it on all sides. Its low houses looked like paving stones in a large meadow from above. Hauser's little daughter was there now in one of those gray-colored houses. In which? Ulrich Kunsì was too far away to be able to make them out separately. How he would have liked to go down while he was yet able!

But the sun had disappeared behind the lofty crest of the Wildstrubel and the young man returned to the chalet. Daddy Hari was smoking, and when he saw his mate come in he proposed a game of cards to him, and they sat down opposite each other, on either side of the table. They played for a long time a simple game called *brisque* and then they had supper and went to bed.

The following days were like the first, bright and cold, without any fresh snow. Old Gaspard spent his afternoons in watching the eagles and other rare birds which ventured on those frozen heights, while Ulrich returned regularly to the Gemmi Pass to

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look at the village. Then they played cards, dice or dominoes and lost and won a trifle, just to create an interest in the game.

One morning Hari, who was up first, called his companion. A moving, deep and light cloud of white spray was falling on them noiselessly and was by degrees burying them under a thick, heavy coverlet of foam. That lasted four days and four nights. It was necessary to free the door and the windows, to dig out a passage and to cut steps to get over this frozen powder, which a twelve hours' frost had made as hard as the granite of the moraines.

They lived like prisoners and did not venture outside their abode. They had divided their duties, which they performed regularly. Ulrich Kungsi undertook the scouring, washing and everything that belonged to cleanliness. He also chopped up the wood, while Gaspard Hari did the cooking and attended to the fire. Their regular and monotonous work was interrupted by long games at cards or dice, and they never quarrelled, but were always calm and placid. They were never seen impatient or ill-humored, nor did they ever use hard words, for they had laid in a stock of patience for their wintering on the top of the mountain.

Sometimes old Gaspard took his rifle and went after chamois, and occasionally he killed one. Then there was a feast in the inn at Schwarenbach and they revelled in fresh meat. One morning he went out as usual. The thermometer outside marked eighteen degrees of frost, and as the sun had not yet risen, the hunter hoped to surprise the animals at the approaches to the Wildstrubel, and Ulrich, being alone, remained in bed until ten o'clock. He was of

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a sleepy nature, but he would not have dared to give way like that to his inclination in the presence of the old guide, who was ever an early riser. He breakfasted leisurely with Sam, who also spent his days and nights in sleeping in front of the fire; then he felt low-spirited and even frightened at the solitude, and was seized by a longing for his daily game of cards, as one is by the craving of a confirmed habit, and so he went out to meet his companion, who was to return at four o'clock.

The snow had levelled the whole deep valley, filled up the crevasses, obliterated all signs of the two lakes and covered the rocks, so that between the high summits there was nothing but an immense, white, regular, dazzling and frozen surface. For three weeks Ulrich had not been to the edge of the precipice from which he had looked down on the village, and he wanted to go there before climbing the slopes which led to Wildstrubel. Loëche was now also covered by the snow and the houses could scarcely be distinguished, covered as they were by that white cloak.

Then, turning to the right, he reached the Loemern glacier. He went along with a mountaineer's long strides, striking the snow, which was as hard as a rock, with his iron-pointed stick, and with his piercing eyes he looked for the little black, moving speck in the distance, on that enormous, white expanse.

When he reached the end of the glacier he stopped and asked himself whether the old man had taken that road, and then he began to walk along the moraines with rapid and uneasy steps. The day was declining, the snow was assuming a rosy tint, and a

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dry, frozen wind blew in rough gusts over its crystal surface. Ulrich uttered a long, shrill, vibrating call. His voice sped through the deathlike silence in which the mountains were sleeping; it reached the distance, across profound and motionless waves of glacial foam, like the cry of a bird across the waves of the sea. Then it died away and nothing answered him.

He began to walk again. The sun had sunk yonder behind the mountain tops, which were still purple with the reflection from the sky, but the depths of the valley were becoming gray, and suddenly the young man felt frightened. It seemed to him as if the silence, the cold, the solitude, the winter death of these mountains were taking possession of him, were going to stop and to freeze his blood, to make his limbs grow stiff and to turn him into a motionless and frozen object, and he set off running, fleeing toward his dwelling. The old man, he thought, would have returned during his absence. He had taken another road; he would, no doubt, be sitting before the fire, with a dead chamois at his feet.

He soon came in sight of the inn, but no smoke rose from it. Ulrich walked faster and opened the door. Sam ran up to him to greet him, but Gaspard Hari had not returned. Kungsi, in his alarm, turned round suddenly, as if he had expected to find his comrade hidden in a corner. Then he relighted the fire and made the soup, hoping every moment to see the old man come in. From time to time he went out to see if he were not coming. It was quite night now, that wan, livid night of the mountains, lighted

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by a thin, yellow crescent moon, just disappearing behind the mountain tops.

Then the young man went in and sat down to warm his hands and feet, while he pictured to himself every possible accident. Gaspard might have broken a leg, have fallen into a crevasse, taken a false step and dislocated his ankle. And, perhaps, he was lying on the snow, overcome and stiff with the cold, in agony of mind, lost and, perhaps, shouting for help, calling with all his might in the silence of the night.

But where? The mountain was so vast, so rugged, so dangerous in places, especially at that time of the year, that it would have required ten or twenty guides to walk for a week in all directions to find a man in that immense space. Ulrich Kungsi, however, made up his mind to set out with Sam if Gaspard did not return by one in the morning, and he made his preparations.

He put provisions for two days into a bag, took his steel climbing iron, tied a long, thin, strong rope round his waist, and looked to see that his iron-shod stick and his axe, which served to cut steps in the ice, were in order. Then he waited. The fire was burning on the hearth, the great dog was snoring in front of it, and the clock was ticking, as regularly as a heart beating, in its resounding wooden case.

He waited, with his ears on the alert for distant sounds, and he shivered when the wind blew against the roof and the walls. It struck twelve and he trembled. Then, frightened and shivering, he put some water on the fire, so that he might have some hot coffee before starting, and when the clock struck

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one he got up, woke Sam, opened the door and went off in the direction of the Wildstrubel. For five hours he mounted, scaling the rocks by means of his climbing irons, cutting into the ice, advancing continually, and occasionally hauling up the dog, who remained below at the foot of some slope that was too steep for him, by means of the rope. It was about six o'clock when he reached one of the summits to which old Gaspard often came after chamois, and he waited till it should be daylight.

The sky was growing pale overhead, and a strange light, springing nobody could tell whence, suddenly illuminated the immense ocean of pale mountain summits, which extended for a hundred leagues around him. One might have said that this vague brightness arose from the snow itself and spread abroad in space. By degrees the highest distant summits assumed a delicate, pink flesh color, and the red sun appeared behind the ponderous giants of the Bernese Alps.

Ulrich Kungsi set off again, walking like a hunter, bent over, looking for tracks, and saying to his dog: "Seek, old fellow, seek!"

He was descending the mountain now, scanning the depths closely, and from time to time shouting, uttering a loud, prolonged cry, which soon died away in that silent vastness. Then he put his ear to the ground to listen. He thought he could distinguish a voice, and he began to run and shouted again, but he heard nothing more and sat down, exhausted and in despair. Toward midday he breakfasted and gave Sam, who was as tired as himself, something to eat also, and then he recommenced his search.

When evening came he was still walking, and he

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had walked more than thirty miles over the mountains. As he was too far away to return home and too tired to drag himself along any further, he dug a hole in the snow and crouched in it with his dog under a blanket which he had brought with him. And the man and the dog lay side by side, trying to keep warm, but frozen to the marrow nevertheless. Ulrich scarcely slept, his mind haunted by visions and his limbs shaking with cold.

Day was breaking when he got up. His legs were as stiff as iron bars and his spirits so low that he was ready to cry with anguish, while his heart was beating so that he almost fell over with agitation, when he thought he heard a noise.

Suddenly he imagined that he also was going to die of cold in the midst of this vast solitude, and the terror of such a death roused his energies and gave him renewed vigor. He was descending toward the inn, falling down and getting up again, and followed at a distance by Sam, who was limping on three legs, and they did not reach Schwarenbach until four o'clock in the afternoon. The house was empty and the young man made a fire, had something to eat and went to sleep, so worn out that he did not think of anything more.

He slept for a long time, for a very long time, an irresistible sleep. But suddenly a voice, a cry, a name, "Ulrich!" aroused him from his profound torpor and made him sit up in bed. Had he been dreaming? Was it one of those strange appeals which cross the dreams of disquieted minds? No, he heard it still, that reverberating cry—which had entered his ears and remained in his flesh—to the tips of his sinewy fingers. Certainly somebody had

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cried out and called "Ulrich!" There was somebody there, near the house, there could be no doubt of that, and he opened the door and shouted, "Is it you, Gaspard?" with all the strength of his lungs. But there was no reply, no murmur, no groan, nothing. It was quite dark and the snow looked wan.

The wind had risen, that icy wind that cracks the rocks and leaves nothing alive on those deserted heights, and it came in sudden gusts, which were more parching and more deadly than the burning wind of the desert, and again Ulrich shouted: "Gaspard! Gaspard! Gaspard." And then he waited again. Everything was silent on the mountain! Then he shook with terror and with a bound he was inside the inn, when he shut and bolted the door, and then he fell into a chair trembling all over, for he felt certain that his comrade had called him at the moment he was expiring.

He was sure of that, as sure as one is of being alive or of eating a piece of bread. Old Gaspard Hari had been dying for two days and three nights somewhere, in some hole, in one of those deep, untrodden ravines whose whiteness is more sinister than subterranean darkness. He had been dying for two days and three nights and he had just then died, thinking of his comrade. His soul, almost before it was released, had taken its flight to the inn where Ulrich was sleeping, and it had called him by that terrible and mysterious power which the spirits of the dead have to haunt the living. That voiceless soul had cried to the worn-out soul of the sleeper; it had uttered its last farewell, or its reproach, or its curse on the man who had not searched carefully enough.

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And Ulrich felt that it was there, quite close to him, behind the wall, behind the door which he had just fastened. It was wandering about, like a night bird which lightly touches a lighted window with his wings, and the terrified young man was ready to scream with horror. He wanted to run away, but did not dare to go out; he did not dare, and he should never dare to do it in the future, for that phantom would remain there day and night, round the inn, as long as the old man's body was not recovered and had not been deposited in the consecrated earth of a churchyard.

When it was daylight Kungsi recovered some of his courage at the return of the bright sun. He prepared his meal, gave his dog some food and then remained motionless on a chair, tortured at heart as he thought of the old man lying on the snow, and then, as soon as night once more covered the mountains, new terrors assailed him. He now walked up and down the dark kitchen, which was scarcely lighted by the flame of one candle, and he walked from one end of it to the other with great strides, listening, listening whether the terrible cry of the other night would again break the dreary silence outside. He felt himself alone, unhappy man, as no man had ever been alone before! He was alone in this immense desert of snow, alone five thousand feet above the inhabited earth, above human habitation, above that stirring, noisy, palpitating life, alone under an icy sky! A mad longing impelled him to run away, no matter where, to get down to Loèche by flinging himself over the precipice; but he did not even dare to open the door, as he felt sure that the other, the dead man, would

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bar his road, so that he might not be obliged to remain up there alone.

Toward midnight, tired with walking, worn out by grief and fear, he at last fell into a doze in his chair, for he was as afraid of his bed as one is of a haunted spot. But suddenly the strident cry of the other evening pierced his ears, and it was so shrill that Ulrich stretched out his arms to repulse the ghost, and he fell backward with his chair.

Sam, who was awakened by the noise, began to howl as frightened dogs do howl, and he walked all about the house trying to find out where the danger came from. When he got to the door, he sniffed beneath it, smelling vigorously, with his coat bristling and his tail stiff, while he growled angrily. Kungsi, who was terrified, jumped up, and, holding his chair by one leg, he cried: "Don't come in, don't come in, or I shall kill you." And the dog, excited by this threat, barked angrily at that invisible enemy who defied his master's voice. By degrees, however, he quieted down and came back and stretched himself in front of the fire, but he was uneasy and kept his head up and growled between his teeth.

Ulrich, in turn, recovered his senses, but as he felt faint with terror, he went and got a bottle of brandy out of the sideboard, and he drank off several glasses, one after another, at a gulp. His ideas became vague, his courage revived and a feverish glow ran through his veins.

He ate scarcely anything the next day and limited himself to alcohol, and so he lived for several days, like a drunken brute. As soon as he thought of Gaspard Hari, he began to drink again, and went

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on drinking until he fell to the ground, overcome by intoxication. And there he remained lying on his face, dead drunk, his limbs benumbed, and snoring loudly. But scarcely had he digested the maddening and burning liquor than the same cry, "Ulrich!" woke him like a bullet piercing his brain, and he got up, still staggering, stretching out his hands to save himself from falling, and calling to Sam to help him. And the dog, who appeared to be going mad like his master, rushed to the door, scratched it with his claws and gnawed it with his long white teeth, while the young man, with his head thrown back, drank the brandy in draughts, as if it had been cold water, so that it might by and by send his thoughts, his frantic terror, and his memory to sleep again.

In three weeks he had consumed all his stock of ardent spirits. But his continual drunkenness only lulled his terror, which awoke more furiously than ever as soon as it was impossible for him to calm it. His fixed idea then, which had been intensified by a month of drunkenness, and which was continually increasing in his absolute solitude, penetrated him like a gimlet. He now walked about the house like a wild beast in its cage, putting his ear to the door to listen if the other were there and defying him through the wall. Then, as soon as he dozed, overcome by fatigue, he heard the voice which made him leap to his feet.

At last one night, as cowards do when driven to extremities, he sprang to the door and opened it, to see who was calling him and to force him to keep quiet, but such a gust of cold wind blew into his face that it chilled him to the bone, and he closed and

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bolted the door again immediately, without noticing that Sam had rushed out. Then, as he was shivering with cold, he threw some wood on the fire and sat down in front of it to warm himself, but suddenly he started, for somebody was scratching at the wall and crying. In desperation he called out: "Go away!" but was answered by another long, sorrowful wail.

Then all his remaining senses forsook him from sheer fright. He repeated: "Go away!" and turned round to try to find some corner in which to hide, while the other person went round the house still crying and rubbing against the wall. Ulrich went to the oak sideboard, which was full of plates and dishes and of provisions, and lifting it up with superhuman strength, he dragged it to the door, so as to form a barricade. Then piling up all the rest of the furniture, the mattresses, palliasses and chairs, he stopped up the windows as one does when assailed by an enemy.

But the person outside now uttered long, plaintive, mournful groans, to which the young man replied by similar groans, and thus days and nights passed without their ceasing to howl at each other. The one was continually walking round the house and scraped the walls with his nails so vigorously that it seemed as if he wished to destroy them, while the other, inside, followed all his movements, stooping down and holding his ear to the walls and replying to all his appeals with terrible cries. One evening, however, Ulrich heard nothing more, and he sat down, so overcome by fatigue, that he went to sleep immediately and awoke in the morning without a thought, without any recollection of what had

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happened, just as if his head had been emptied during his heavy sleep, but he felt hungry, and he ate.

The winter was over and the Gemmi Pass was practicable again, so the Hauser family started off to return to their inn. As soon as they had reached the top of the ascent the women mounted their mule and spoke about the two men whom they would meet again shortly. They were, indeed, rather surprised that neither of them had come down a few days before, as soon as the road was open, in order to tell them all about their long winter sojourn. At last, however, they saw the inn, still covered with snow, like a quilt. The door and the window were closed, but a little smoke was coming out of the chimney, which reassured old Hauser. On going up to the door, however, he saw the skeleton of an animal which had been torn to pieces by the eagles, a large skeleton lying on its side.

They all looked close at it and the mother said: "That must be Sam," and then she shouted: "Hi, Gaspard!" A cry from the interior of the house answered her and a sharp cry that one might have thought some animal had uttered it. Old Hauser repeated, "Hi, Gaspard!" and they heard another cry similar to the first.

Then the three men, the father and the two sons, tried to open the door, but it resisted their efforts. From the empty cow-stall they took a beam to serve as a battering-ram and hurled it against the door with all their might. The wood gave way and the boards flew into splinters. Then the house was shaken by a loud voice, and inside, behind the side-board which was overturned, they saw a man stand-

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ing upright, with his hair falling on his shoulders and a beard descending to his breast, with shining eyes, and nothing but rags to cover him. They did not recognize him, but Louise Hauser exclaimed: "It is Ulrich, mother." And her mother declared that it was Ulrich, although his hair was white.

He allowed them to go up to him and to touch him, but he did not reply to any of their questions, and they were obliged to take him to Loèche, where the doctors found that he was mad, and nobody ever found out what had become of his companion.

Little Louise Hauser nearly died that summer of decline, which the physicians attributed to the cold air of the mountains.

THE QUESTION OF LATIN

THIS subject of Latin that has been dinned into our ears for some time past recalls to my mind a story—a story of my youth.

I was finishing my studies with a teacher, in a big central town, at the Institution Robineau, celebrated through the entire province for the special attention paid there to the study of Latin.

For the past ten years, the Robineau Institute beat the imperial *lycée* of the town at every competitive examination, and all the colleges of the sub-prefecture, and these constant successes were due, they said, to an usher, a simple usher, M. Piquedent, or rather Père Piquedent.

He was one of those middle-aged men quite gray, whose real age it is impossible to tell, and whose history we can guess at first glance. Having entered as an usher at twenty into the first institution that presented itself so that he could proceed to take first his degree of Master of Arts and afterward the degree of Doctor of Laws, he found himself so enmeshed in this routine that he remained an usher all his life. But his love for Latin did not leave him and harassed him like an unhealthy passion. He continued to read the poets, the prose writers, the historians, to interpret them and penetrate their meaning, to comment on them with a perseverance bordering on madness.

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One day, the idea came into his head to oblige all the students in his class to answer him in Latin only; and he persisted in this resolution until at last they were capable of sustaining an entire conversation with him just as they would in their mother tongue. He listened to them, as a leader of an orchestra listens to his musicians rehearsing, and striking his desk every moment with his ruler, he exclaimed:

"Monsieur Lefrère, Monsieur Lefrère, you are committing a solecism! You forget the rule.

"Monsieur Plantel, your way of expressing yourself is altogether French and in no way Latin. You must understand the genius of a language. Look here, listen to me."

Now, it came to pass that the pupils of the Institution Robineau carried off, at the end of the year, all the prizes for composition, translation, and Latin conversation.

Next year, the principal, a little man, as cunning as an ape, whom he resembled in his grinning and grotesque appearance, had had printed on his programmes, on his advertisements, and painted on the door of his institution:

"Latin Studies a Specialty. Five first prizes carried off in the five classes of the *lycée*.

"Two honor prizes at the general examinations in competition with all the *lycées* and colleges of France."

For ten years the Institution Robineau triumphed in the same fashion. Now my father, allured by these successes, sent me as a day pupil to Robineau's—or, as we called it, Robinetto or Robinettino's—and made me take special private lessons

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from Père Piquedent at the rate of five francs per hour, out of which the usher got two francs and the principal three francs. I was then eighteen, and was in the philosophy class.

These private lessons were given in a little room looking out on the street. It so happened that Père Piquedent, instead of talking Latin to me, as he did when teaching publicly in the institution, kept telling me his troubles in French. Without relations, without friends, the poor man conceived an attachment to me, and poured out his misery to me.

He had never for the last ten or fifteen years chatted confidentially with any one.

"I am like an oak in a desert," he said—"*sicut quercus in solitudine.*"

The other ushers disgusted him. He knew nobody in the town, since he had no time to devote to making acquaintances.

"Not even the nights, my friend, and that is the hardest thing on me. The dream of my life is to have a room with my own furniture, my own books, little things that belong to myself and which others may not touch. And I have nothing of my own, nothing except my trousers and my frock-coat, nothing, not even my mattress and my pillow! I have not four walls to shut myself up in, except when I come to give a lesson in this room. Do you see what this means—a man forced to spend his life without ever having the right, without ever finding the time, to shut himself up all alone, no matter where, to think, to reflect, to work, to dream? Ah! my dear boy, a key, the key of a door which one can lock—this is happiness, mark you, the only happiness!

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"Here, all day long, teaching all those restless rogues, and during the night the dormitory with the same restless rogues snoring. And I have to sleep in the bed at the end of two rows of beds occupied by these youngsters whom I must look after. I can never be alone, never! If I go out I find the streets full of people, and, when I am tired of walking, I go into some café crowded with smokers and billiard players. I tell you what, it is the life of a galley slave."

I said:

"Why did you not take up some other line, Monsieur Piquedent?"

He exclaimed:

"What, my little friend? I am not a shoemaker, or a joiner, or a hatter, or a baker, or a hair-dresser. I only know Latin, and I have no diploma which would enable me to sell my knowledge at a high price. If I were a doctor I would sell for a hundred francs what I now sell for a hundred sous; and I would supply it probably of an inferior quality, for my title would be enough to sustain my reputation."

Sometimes he would say to me:

"I have no rest in life except in the hours spent with you. Don't be afraid! you'll lose nothing by that. I'll make it up to you in the class-room by making you speak twice as much Latin as the others."

One day, I grew bolder, and offered him a cigarette. He stared at me in astonishment at first, then he gave a glance toward the door.

"If any one were to come in, my dear boy?"

"Well, let us smoke at the window," said I.

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And we went and leaned our elbows on the window-sill looking on the street, holding concealed in our hands the little rolls of tobacco. Just opposite to us was a laundry. Four women in loose white waists were passing hot, heavy irons over the linen spread out before them, from which a warm steam arose.

Suddenly, another, a fifth, carrying on her arm a large basket which made her stoop, came out to take the customers their shirts, their handkerchiefs, and their sheets. She stopped on the threshold as if she were already fatigued; then, she raised her eyes, smiled as she saw us smoking, flung at us, with her left hand, which was free, the sly kiss characteristic of a free-and-easy workingwoman, and went away at a slow pace, dragging her feet as she went.

She was a woman of about twenty, small, rather thin, pale, rather pretty, with a roguish air and laughing eyes beneath her ill-combed fair hair.

Père Piquedent, affected, began murmuring:

"What an occupation for a woman! Really a trade only fit for a horse."

And he spoke with emotion about the misery of the people. He had a heart which swelled with lofty democratic sentiment, and he referred to the fatiguing pursuits of the working class with phrases borrowed from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and with sobs in his throat.

Next day, as we were leaning our elbows on the same window sill, the same woman perceived us and cried out to us:

"Good-day, scholars!" in a comical sort of tone, while she made a contemptuous gesture with her hands.

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I flung her a cigarette, which she immediately began to smoke. And the four other ironers rushed out to the door with outstretched hands to get cigarettes also.

And each day a friendly intercourse was established between the workingwomen of the pavement and the idlers of the boarding school.

Père Piquedent was really a comical sight. He trembled at being noticed, for he might lose his position; and he made timid and ridiculous gestures, quite a theatrical display of love signals, to which the women responded with a regular fusillade of kisses.

A perfidious idea came into my mind. One day, on entering our room, I said to the old usher in a low tone:

"You would not believe it, Monsieur Piquedent, I met the little washerwoman! You know the one I mean, the woman who had the basket, and I spoke to her!"

He asked, rather worried at my manner:

"What did she say to you?"

"She said to me—why, she said she thought you were very nice. The fact of the matter is, I believe, I believe, that she is a little in love with you." I saw that he was growing pale.

"She is laughing at me, of course. These things don't happen at my age," he replied.

I said gravely:

"How is that? You are all right."

As I felt that my trick had produced its effect on him, I did not press the matter

But every day I pretended that I had met the little laundress and that I had spoken to her about

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him, so that in the end he believed me, and sent her ardent and earnest kisses.

Now it happened that one morning, on my way to the boarding school, I really came across her. I accosted her without hesitation, as if I had known her for the last ten years.

"Good-day, mademoiselle. Are you quite well?"

"Very well, monsieur, thank you."

"Will you have a cigarette?"

"Oh! not in the street."

"You can smoke it at home."

"In that case, I will."

"Let me tell you, mademoiselle, there's something you don't know."

"What is that, monsieur?"

"The old gentleman—my old professor, I mean——"

"Père Piquedent?"

"Yes, Père Piquedent. So you know his name?"

"Faith, I do! What of that?"

"Well, he is in love with you!"

She burst out laughing wildly, and exclaimed:

"You are only fooling."

"Oh! no, I am not fooling! He keeps talking of you all through the lesson. I bet that he'll marry you!"

She ceased laughing. The idea of marriage makes every girl serious. Then she repeated, with an incredulous air:

"This is humbug!"

"I swear to you, it's true."

She picked up her basket which she had laid down at her feet.

"Well, we'll see," she said. And she went away.

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Presently when I had reached the boarding school, I took Père Piquedent aside, and said:

"You must write to her; she is infatuated with you."

And he wrote a long letter, tenderly affectionate, full of phrases and circumlocutions, metaphors and similes, philosophy and academic gallantry; and I took on myself the responsibility of delivering it to the young woman.

She read it with gravity, with emotion; then she murmured:

"How well he writes! It is easy to see he has got education! Does he really mean to marry me?"

I replied intrepidly: "Faith, he has lost his head about you!"

"Then he must invite me to dinner on Sunday at the *Ile des Fleurs*."

I promised that she should be invited.

Père Piquedent was much touched by everything I told him about her.

I added:

"She loves you, Monsieur Piquedent, and I believe her to be a decent girl. It is not right to lead her on and then abandon her."

He replied in a firm tone:

"I hope I, too, am a decent man, my friend."

I confess I had at the time no plan. I was playing a practical joke, a schoolboy joke, nothing more. I had been aware of the simplicity of the old usher, his innocence and his weakness. I amused myself without asking myself how it would turn out. I was eighteen, and I had been for a long time looked upon at the *lycée* as a sly practical joker.

So it was agreed that Père Piquedent and I

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should set out in a hack for the ferry of Queue de Vache, that we should there pick up Angèle, and that I should take them into my boat, for in those days I was fond of boating. I would then bring them to the Ile des Fleurs, where the three of us would dine. I had inflicted myself on them, the better to enjoy my triumph, and the usher, consenting to my arrangement, proved clearly that he was losing his head by thus risking the loss of his position.

When we arrived at the ferry, where my boat had been moored since morning, I saw in the grass, or rather above the tall weeds of the bank, an enormous red parasol, resembling a monstrous wild poppy. Beneath the parasol was the little laundress in her Sunday clothes. I was surprised. She was really pretty, though pale; and graceful, though with a rather suburban grace.

Père Piquedent raised his hat and bowed. She put out her hand toward him, and they stared at one another without uttering a word. Then they stepped into my boat, and I took the oars. They were seated side by side near the stern.

The usher was the first to speak.

"This is nice weather for a row in a boat."

She murmured:

"Oh! yes."

She dipped her hand into the water, skimming the surface, making a thin, transparent film like a sheet of glass, which made a soft plashing along the side of the boat.

When they were in the restaurant, she took it on herself to speak, and ordered dinner, fried fish,

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a chicken, and salad; then she led us on toward the isle, which she knew perfectly.

After this, she was gay, romping, and even rather tantalizing.

Until dessert, no question of love arose. I had treated them to champagne, and Père Piquedent was tipsy. Herself slightly the worse, she called out to him:

"Monsieur Piquenez."

He said abruptly:

"Mademoiselle, Monsieur Raoul has communicated my sentiments to you."

She became as serious as a judge.

"Yes, monsieur."

"What is your reply?"

"We never reply to these questions!"

He puffed with emotion, and went on:

"Well, will the day ever come that you will like me?"

She smiled.

"You big stupid! You are very nice."

"In short, mademoiselle, do you think that, later on, we might——"

She hesitated a second; then in a trembling voice she said:

"Do you mean to marry me when you say that? For on no other condition, you know."

"Yes, mademoiselle!"

"Well, that's all right, Monsieur Piquedent!"

It was thus that these two silly creatures promised marriage to each other through the trick of a young scamp. But I did not believe that it was serious, nor, indeed, did they, perhaps.

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"You know, I have nothing, not four sous," she said.

He stammered, for he was as drunk as Silenus:

"I have saved five thousand francs."

She exclaimed triumphantly:

"Then we can set up in business?"

He became restless.

"In what business?"

"What do I know? We shall see. With five thousand francs we could do many things. You don't want me to go and live in your boarding school, do you?"

He had not looked forward so far as this, and he stammered in great perplexity:

"What business could we set up in? That would not do, for all I know is Latin!"

She reflected in her turn, passing in review all her business ambitions.

"You could not be a doctor?"

"No, I have no diploma."

"Or a chimist?"

"No more than the other."

She uttered a cry of joy. She had discovered it.

"Then we'll buy a grocer's shop! Oh! what luck! we'll buy a grocer's shop. Not on a big scale, of course; with five thousand francs one does not go far."

He was shocked at the suggestion.

"No, I can't be a grocer. I am—I am—too well known. I only know Latin, that is all I know."

But she poured a glass of champagne down his throat. He drank it and was silent.

We got back into the boat. The night was dark, very dark. I saw clearly, however, that he had

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caught her by the waist, and that they were hugging each other again and again.

It was a frightful catastrophe. Our escapade was discovered, with the result that Père Piquedent was dismissed. And my father, in a fit of anger, sent me to finish my course of philosophy at Ribaudet's school.

Six months later I took my degree of Bachelor of Arts. Then I went to study law in Paris, and did not return to my native town till two years later.

At the corner of the Rue de Serpent a shop caught my eye. Over the door were the words: "Colonial Products—Piquedent"; then underneath, so as to enlighten the most ignorant: "Grocery."

I exclaimed:

"Quantum mutatus ab illo!"

Piquedent raised his head, left his female customer, and rushed toward me with outstretched hands.

"Ah! my young friend, my young friend, here you are! What luck! what luck!"

A beautiful woman, very plump, abruptly left the cashier's desk and flung herself on my breast. I had some difficulty in recognizing her, she had grown so stout.

I asked:

"So then you're doing well?"

Piquedent had gone back to weigh the groceries.

"Oh! very well, very well, very well. I have made three thousand francs clear this year!"

"And what about Latin, Monsieur Piquedent?"

"Oh, good heavens! Latin, Latin, Latin—you see it does not keep the pot boiling!"

THE EFFEMINATES

HOW often we hear people say, "He is charming, that man, but he is a girl, a regular girl." They are alluding to the effeminates, the bane of our land.

For we are all girl-like men in France—that is, fickle, fanciful, innocently treacherous, without consistency in our convictions or our will, violent and weak as women are.

But the most irritating of girl-men is assuredly the Parisian and the boulevardier, in whom the appearance of intelligence is more marked and who combines in himself all the attractions and all the faults of those charming creatures in an exaggerated degree in virtue of his masculine temperament.

Our Chamber of Deputies is full of girl-men. They form the greater number of the amiable opportunists whom one might call "The Charmers." These are they who control by soft words and deceitful promises, who know how to shake hands in such a manner as to win hearts, how to say "My dear friend" in a certain tactful way to people he knows the least, to change his mind without suspecting it, to be carried away by each new idea, to be sincere in their weathercock convictions, to let themselves be deceived as they deceive others,

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to forget the next morning what he affirmed the day before.

The newspapers are full of these effeminate men. That is probably where one finds the most, but it is also where they are most needed. The *Journal des Débats* and the *Gazette de France* are exceptions.

Assuredly, every good journalist must be somewhat effeminate—that is, at the command of the public, supple in following unconsciously the shades of public opinion, wavering and varying, sceptical and credulous, wicked and devout, a braggart and a true man, enthusiastic and ironical, and always convinced while believing in nothing.

Foreigners, our anti-types, as Mme. Abel called them, the stubborn English and the heavy Germans, regard us with a certain amazement mingled with contempt, and will continue to so regard us till the end of time. They consider us frivolous. It is not that, it is that we are girls. And that is why people love us in spite of our faults, why they come back to us despite the evil spoken of us; these are lovers' quarrels! . . .

The effeminate man, as one meets him in this world, is so charming that he captivates you after five minutes' chat. His smile seems made for you; one cannot believe that his voice does not assume specially tender intonations on their account. When he leaves you it seems as if one had known him for twenty years. One is quite ready to lend him money if he asks for it. He has enchanted you, like a woman.

If he commits any breach of manners towards you, you cannot bear any malice, he is so pleasant when you next meet him. If he asks your pardon

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you long to ask pardon of him. Does he tell lies? You cannot believe it. Does he put you off indefinitely with promises that he does not keep? One lays as much store by his promises as though he had moved heaven and earth to render them a service.

When he admires anything he goes into such raptures that he convinces you. He once adored Victor Hugo, whom he now treats as a back number. He would have fought for Zola, whom he has abandoned for Barbey and d'Aurevilly. And when he admires, he permits no limitation, he would slap your face for a word. But when he becomes scornful, his contempt is unbounded and allows of no protest.

In fact, he understands nothing.

Listen to two girls talking.

"Then you are angry with Julia?" "I slapped her face." "What had she done?" "She told Pauline that I had no money thirteen months out of twelve, and Pauline told Gontran—you understand." "You were living together in the Rue Clanzel?" "We lived together four years in the Rue Bréda; we quarrelled about a pair of stockings that she said I had worn—it wasn't true—silk stockings that she had bought at Mother Martin's. Then I gave her a pounding and she left me at once. I met her six months ago and she asked me to come and live with her, as she has rented a flat that is twice too large."

One goes on one's way and hears no more. But on the following Sunday as one is on the way to Saint Germain two young women get into the same railway carriage. One recognizes one of them at once; it is Julia's enemy. The other is—Julia!

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And there are endearments, caresses, plans. "Say, Julia—listen, Julia," etc.

The girl-man has his friendships of this kind. For three months he cannot bear to leave his old Jack, his dear Jack. There is no one but Jack in the world. He is the only one who has any intelligence, any sense, any talent. He alone amounts to anything in Paris. One meets them everywhere together, they dine together, walk about in company, and every evening walk home with each other back and forth without being able to part with one another.

Three months later, if Jack is mentioned:

"There is a drinker, a sorry fellow, a scoundrel for you. I know him well, you may be sure. And he is not even honest, and ill-bred," etc., etc.

Three months later, and they are living together.

But one morning one hears that they have fought a duel, then embraced each other, amid tears, on the duelling ground.

Just now they are the dearest friends in the world, furious with each other half the year, abusing and loving each other by turns, squeezing each other's hands till they almost crush the bones, and ready to run each other through the body for a misunderstanding.

For the relations of these effeminate men are uncertain. Their temper is by fits and starts, their delight unexpected, their affection turn-about-face, their enthusiasm subject to eclipse. One day they love you, the next day they will hardly look at you, for they have in fact a girl's nature, a girl's charm, a girl's temperament, and all their sentiments are like the affections of girls.

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They treat their friends as women treat their pet dogs.

It is the dear little Toutou whom they hug, feed with sugar, allow to sleep on the pillow, but whom they would be just as likely to throw out of a window in a moment of impatience, whom they turn round like a sling, holding it by the tail, squeeze in their arms till they almost strangle it, and plunge, without any reason, in a pail of cold water.

Then, what a strange thing it is when one of these beings falls in love with a real girl! He beats her, she scratches him, they execrate each other, cannot bear the sight of each other and yet cannot part, linked together by no one knows what mysterious psychic bonds. She deceives him, he knows it, sobs and forgives her. He despises and adores her without seeing that she would be justified in despising him. They are both atrociously unhappy and yet cannot separate. They cast invectives, reproaches and abominable accusations at each other from morning till night, and when they have reached the climax and are vibrating with rage and hatred, they fall into each other's arms and kiss each other ardently.

The girl-man is brave and a coward at the same time. He has, more than another, the exalted sentiment of honor, but is lacking in the sense of simple honesty, and, circumstances favoring him, would defalcate and commit infamies which do not trouble his conscience, for he obeys without questioning the oscillations of his ideas, which are always impulsive.

To him it seems permissible and almost right to cheat a haberdasher. He considers it honorable

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not to pay his debts, unless they are gambling debts—that is, somewhat shady. He dupes people whenever the laws of society admit of his doing so. When he is short of money he borrows in all ways, not always being scrupulous as to tricking the lenders, but he would, with sincere indignation, run his sword through anyone who should suspect him of only lacking in politeness.

A QUEER NIGHT IN PARIS

MAÎTRE SAVAL, notary at Vernon, was passionately fond of music. Although still young he was already bald; he was always carefully shaven, was somewhat corpulent as was suitable, and wore a gold pince-nez instead of spectacles. He was active, gallant and cheerful and was considered quite an artist in Vernon. He played the piano and the violin, and gave musicals where the new operas were interpreted.

He had even what is called a bit of a voice; nothing but a bit, a very little bit of a voice; but he managed it with so much taste that cries of "Bravo!" "Exquisite!" "Surprising!" "Adorable!" issued from every throat as soon as he had murmured the last note.

He subscribed to a music publishing house in Paris, and they sent him the latest music, and from time to time he sent invitations after this fashion to the *élite* of the town:

"You are invited to be present on Monday evening at the house of M. Saval, notary, Vernon, at the first rendering of 'Sais.'"

A few officers, gifted with good voices, formed the chorus. Two or three lady amateurs also sang. The notary filled the part of leader of the orchestra with so much correctness that the bandmaster of

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the 190th regiment of the line said of him, one day, at the Café de l'Europe:

"Oh! M. Saval is a master. It is a great pity that he did not adopt the career of an artist."

When his name was mentioned in a drawing-room, there was always somebody found to declare: "He is not an amateur; he is an artist, a genuine artist."

And two or three persons repeated, in a tone of profound conviction:

"Oh! yes, a genuine artist," laying particular stress on the word "genuine."

Every time that a new work was interpreted at a big Parisian theatre M. Saval paid a visit to the capital.

Now, last year, according to his custom, he went to hear *Henri VIII*. He then took the express which arrives in Paris at 4:30 P.M., intending to return by the 12:35 A.M. train, so as not to have to sleep at a hotel. He had put on evening dress, a black coat and white tie, which he concealed under his overcoat with the collar turned up.

As soon as he set foot on the Rue d'Amsterdam, he felt himself in quite jovial mood. He said to himself:

"Decidedly, the air of Paris does not resemble any other air. It has in it something indescribably stimulating, exciting, intoxicating, which fills you with a strange longing to dance about and to do many other things. As soon as I arrive here, it seems to me, all of a sudden, that I have taken a bottle of champagne. What a life one can lead in this city in the midst of artists! Happy are the elect,

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the great men who make themselves a reputation in such a city! What an existence is theirs!"

And he made plans; he would have liked to know some of these celebrated men, to talk about them in Vernon, and to spend an evening with them from time to time in Paris.

But suddenly an idea struck him. He had heard allusions to little cafés in the outer boulevards at which well-known painters, men of letters, and even musicians gathered, and he proceeded to go up to Montmartre at a slow pace.

He had two hours before him. He wanted to look about him. He passed in front of taverns frequented by belated bohemians, gazing at the different faces, seeking to discover the artists. Finally, he came to the sign of "The Dead Rat," and, allured by the name, he entered.

Five or six women, with their elbows resting on the marble tables, were talking in low tones about their love affairs, the quarrels of Lucie and Hortense, and the scoundrelism of Octave. They were no longer young, were too fat or too thin, tired out, used up. You could see that they were almost bald; and they drank beer like men.

M. Saval sat down at some distance from them and waited, for the hour for taking absinthe was at hand.

A tall young man soon came in and took a seat beside him. The landlady called him M. "Roman-tin." The notary quivered. Was this the Romantin who had taken a medal at the last Salon?

The young man made a sign to the waiter.

"You will bring up my dinner at once, and then carry to my new studio, 15 Boulevard de Clichy,

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thirty bottles of beer, and the ham I ordered this morning. We are going to have a housewarming."

M. Saval immediately ordered dinner. Then, he took off his overcoat, so that his dress suit and his white tie could be seen. His neighbor did not seem to notice him. He had taken up a newspaper, and was reading it. M. Saval glanced sideways at him, burning with the desire to speak to him.

Two young men entered, in red vests and with peaked beards, in the fashion of Henry III. They sat down opposite Romantin.

The first of the pair said:

"Is it for this evening?"

Romantin pressed his hand.

"I believe you, old chap, and everyone will be there. I have Bonnat, Guillemet, Gervex, Béraud, Hébert, Duez, Clairin, and Jean-Paul Laurens. It will be a stunning affair! And women, too! Wait till you see! Every actress without exception—of course I mean, you know, all those who have nothing to do this evening."

The landlord of the establishment came across.

"Do you often have this housewarming?"

The painter replied:

"I believe you, every three months, each quarter."

M. Saval could not restrain himself any longer, and in a hesitating voice said:

"I beg your pardon for intruding on you, monsieur, but I heard your name mentioned, and I would be very glad to know if you really are M. Romantin, whose work in the last Salon I have so much admired?"

The painter answered:

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"I am the very person, monsieur."

The notary then paid the artist a very well-turned compliment, showing that he was a man of culture.

The painter, gratified, thanked him politely in reply.

Then they chattered. Romantin returned to the subject of his housewarming, going into details as to the magnificence of the forthcoming entertainment.

M. Saval questioned him as to all the men he was going to receive, adding:

"It would be an extraordinary piece of good fortune for a stranger to meet at one time so many celebrities assembled in the studio of an artist of your rank."

Romantin, vanquished, replied:

"If it would be agreeable to you, come."

M. Saval accepted the invitation with enthusiasm, reflecting:

"I shall have time enough to see *Henri VIII.*"

Both of them had finished their meal. The notary insisted on paying the two bills, wishing to repay his neighbor's civilities. He also paid for the drinks of the young fellows in red velvet; then he left the establishment with the painter.

They stopped in front of a very long, low house, the first story having the appearance of an interminable conservatory. Six studios stood in a row with their fronts facing the boulevards.

Romantin was the first to enter, and, ascending the stairs, he opened a door, and lighted a match and then a candle.

They found themselves in an immense apartment, the furniture of which consisted of three chairs, two

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easels, and a few sketches standing on the ground along the walls. M. Saval remained standing at the door somewhat astonished.

The painter remarked:

"Here you are! we've got to the spot; but everything has yet to be done."

Then, examining the high, bare apartment, its ceiling disappearing in the darkness, he said:

"We might make a great deal out of this studio."

He walked round it, surveying it with the utmost attention, then went on:

"I know someone who might easily give a helping hand. Women are incomparable for hanging drapery. But I sent her to the country for to-day in order to get her off my hands this evening. It is not that she bores me, but she is too much lacking in the ways of good society. It would be embarrassing to my guests."

He reflected for a few seconds, and then added:

"She is a good girl, but not easy to deal with. If she knew that I was holding a reception, she would tear out my eyes."

M. Saval had not even moved; he did not understand.

The artist came over to him.

"Since I have invited you, you will assist me about something."

The notary said emphatically:

"Make any use of me you please. I am at your disposal."

Romantin took off his jacket.

"Well, citizen, to work! We are first going to clean up."

He went to the back of the easel, on which there

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was a canvas representing a cat, and seized a very worn-out broom.

"I say! Just brush up while I look after the lighting."

M. Saval took the broom, inspected it, and then began to sweep the floor very awkwardly, raising a whirlwind of dust.

Romantin, disgusted, stopped him: "Deuce take it! you don't know how to sweep the floor! Look at me!"

And he began to roll before him a heap of grayish sweepings, as if he had done nothing else all his life. Then, he gave back the broom to the notary, who imitated him.

In five minutes, such a cloud of dust filled the studio that Romantin asked:

"Where are you? I can't see you any longer."

M. Saval, who was coughing, came near to him. The painter said:

"How would you set about making a chandelier?"

The other, surprised, asked:

"What chandelier?"

"Why, a chandelier to light the room—a chandelier with wax-candles."

The notary did not understand.

He answered: "I don't know."

The painter began to jump about, cracking his fingers.

"Well, monseigneur, I have found out a way."

Then he went on more calmly:

"Have you got five francs about you?"

M. Saval replied:

"Why, yes."

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The artist said: "Well! you'll go out and buy for me five francs' worth of wax-candles while I go and see the cooper."

And he pushed the notary in his evening coat into the street. At the end of five minutes, they had returned, one of them with the wax-candles and the other with the hoop of a cask. Then Romantin plunged his hand into a cupboard, and drew forth twenty empty bottles, which he fixed in the form of a crown around the hoop.

He then went downstairs to borrow a ladder from the janitress, after having explained that he had made interest with the old woman by painting the portrait of her cat, exhibited on the easel.

When he returned with the ladder, he said to M. Saval:

"Are you active?"

The other, without understanding, answered:

"Why, yes."

"Well, you just climb up there, and fasten this chandelier for me to the ring of the ceiling. Then, you put a wax-candle in each bottle, and light it. I tell you I have a genius for lighting up. But off with your coat, damn it! You are just like a Jeames."

The door was opened brusquely. A woman appeared, her eyes flashing, and remained standing on the threshold.

Romantin gazed at her with a look of terror.

She waited some seconds, crossing her arms over her breast, and then in a shrill, vibrating, exasperated voice said:

"Ha! you dirty scoundrel, is this the way you leave me?"

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Romantin made no reply. She went on:

"Ha! you scoundrel! You did a nice thing in packing me off to the country. You'll soon see the way I'll settle your jollification. Yes, I'm going to receive your friends."

She grew warmer.

"I'm going to slap their faces with the bottles and the wax-candles——"

Romantin said in a soft tone:

"Mathilde——"

But she did not pay any attention to him; she went on:

"Wait a little, my fine fellow! wait a little!"

Romantin went over to her, and tried to take her by the hands.

"Mathilde——"

But she was now fairly under way; and on she went, emptying the vials of her wrath with strong words and reproaches. They flowed out of her mouth like a stream sweeping a heap of filth along with it. The words pouring forth seemed struggling for exit. She stuttered, stammered, yelled, suddenly recovering her voice to cast forth an insult or a curse.

He seized her hands without her having noticed it. She did not seem to see anything, so taken up was she in scolding and relieving her feelings. And suddenly she began to weep. The tears flowed from her eyes, but this did not stop her complaints. But her words were uttered in a screaming falsetto voice with tears in it and interrupted by sobs. She commenced afresh twice or three times, till she stopped as if something were choking her, and at last she ceased with a regular flood of tears.

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Then he clasped her in his arms and kissed her hair, affected himself.

"Mathilde, my little Mathilde, listen. You must be reasonable. You know, if I give a supper-party to my friends, it is to thank these gentlemen for the medal I got at the Salon. I cannot receive women. You ought to understand that. It is not the same with artists as with other people."

She stammered in the midst of her tears:

"Why didn't you tell me this?"

He replied:

"It was in order not to annoy you, not to give you pain. Listen, I'm going to see you home. You will be very sensible, very nice; you will remain quietly waiting for me in bed, and I'll come back as soon as it's over."

She murmured:

"Yes, but you will not begin over again?"

"No, I swear to you!"

He turned towards M. Saval, who had at last hooked on the chandelier:

"My dear friend, I am coming back in five minutes. If anyone arrives in my absence, do the honors for me, will you not?"

And he carried off Mathilde, who kept drying her eyes with her handkerchief as she went along.

Left to himself, M. Saval succeeded in putting everything around him in order. Then he lighted the wax-candles, and waited.

He waited for a quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour. Romantin did not return. Then, suddenly there was a dreadful noise on the stairs, a song shouted out in chorus by twenty mouths and a regular march like that of a Prussian regiment. The

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whole house was shaken by the steady tramp of feet. The door flew open, and a motley throng appeared—men and women in file, two and two holding each other by the arm and stamping their heels on the ground to mark time, advanced into the studio like a snake uncoiling itself. They howled:

"Come, and let us all be merry,
Pretty maids and soldiers gay!"

M. Saval, thunderstruck, remained standing in evening dress under the chandelier. The procession of revellers caught sight of him, and uttered a shout:

"A Jeames! A Jeames!"

And they began whirling round him, surrounding him with a circle of vociferations. Then they took each other by the hand and went dancing about madly.

He attempted to explain:

"Messieurs—messieurs—mesdames——"

But they did not listen to him. They whirled about, they jumped, they brawled.

At last, the dancing ceased. M. Saval said:

"Gentlemen——"

A tall young fellow, fair-haired and bearded to the nose, interrupted him:

"What's your name, my friend?"

The notary, quite scared, said:

"I am M. Saval."

A voice exclaimed:

"You mean Baptiste."

A woman said:

"Let the poor waiter alone! You'll end by making him get angry. He's paid to wait on us, and not to be laughed at by us."

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Then, M. Saval noticed that each guest had brought his own provisions. One held a bottle of wine, and the other a pie. This one had a loaf of bread, and one a ham.

The tall, fair young fellow placed in his hands an enormous sausage, and gave orders:

"Here, go and arrange the sideboard in the corner over there. Put the bottles at the left and the provisions at the right."

Saval, getting quite distracted, exclaimed: "But, messieurs, I am a notary!"

There was a moment's silence and then a wild outburst of laughter. One suspicious gentleman asked:

"How came you to be here?"

He explained, telling about his project of going to the opera, his departure from Vernon, his arrival in Paris, and the way in which he had spent the evening.

They sat around him to listen to him; they greeted him with words of applause, and called him Scheherazade.

Romantin did not return. Other guests arrived. M. Saval was presented to them so that he might begin his story over again. He declined; they forced him to relate it. They seated and tied him on one of three chairs between two women who kept constantly filling his glass. He drank; he laughed; he talked; he sang, too. He tried to waltz with his chair, and fell on the ground.

From that moment, he forgot everything. It seemed to him, however, that they undressed him, put him to bed, and that he was nauseated.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight, and he

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lay stretched with his feet against a cupboard, in a strange bed.

An old woman with a broom in her hand was glaring angrily at him. At last, she said:

"Clear out, you blackguard! Clear out! What right has anyone to get drunk like this?"

He sat up in bed, feeling very ill at ease. He asked:

"Where am I?"

"Where are you, you dirty scamp? You are drunk. Take your rotten carcass out of here as quick as you can—and lose no time about it!"

He wanted to get up. He found that he was in no condition to do so. His clothes had disappeared. He blurted out:

"Madame, I——"

Then he remembered. . . . What was he to do? He asked:

"Did Monsieur Romantin come back?"

The doorkeeper shouted:

"Will you take your dirty carcass out of this, so that he at any rate may not catch you here?"

M. Saval said, in a state of confusion:

"I haven't got my clothes; they have been taken away from me."

He had to wait, to explain his situation, give notice to his friends, and borrow some money to buy clothes. He did not leave Paris till evening.

And when people talk about music to him in his beautiful drawing-room in Vernon, he declares with an air of authority that painting is a very inferior art.

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THE household lived frugally on the meager income derived from the husband's insignificant appointments. Two children had been born of the marriage, and the earlier condition of the strictest economy had become one of quiet, concealed, shamefaced misery, the poverty of a noble family which in spite of misfortune never forgets its rank.

Hector de Gribelin had been educated in the provinces, under the paternal roof, by an aged priest. His people were not rich, but they managed to live and to keep up appearances.

At twenty years of age they tried to find him a position, and he entered the Ministry of Marine as a clerk at sixty pounds a year. He foundered on the rock of life like all those who have not been early prepared for its rude struggles, who look at life through a mist, who do not know how to protect themselves, whose special aptitudes and faculties have not been developed from childhood, whose early training has not developed the rough energy needed for the battle of life or furnished them with tool or weapon.

His first three years of office work were a martyrdom.

He had, however, renewed the acquaintance of a few friends of his family—elderly people, far behind

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the times, and poor like himself, who lived in aristocratic streets, the gloomy thoroughfares of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; and he had created a social circle for himself.

Strangers to modern life, humble yet proud, these needy aristocrats lived in the upper stories of sleepy, old-world houses. From top to bottom of their dwellings the tenants were titled, but money seemed just as scarce on the ground floor as in the attics.

Their eternal prejudices, absorption in their rank, anxiety lest they should lose caste, filled the minds and thoughts of these families once so brilliant, now ruined by the idleness of the men of the family. Hector de Gribelin met in this circle a young girl as well born and as poor as himself and married her.

They had two children in four years.

For four years more the husband and wife, harassed by poverty, knew no other distraction than the Sunday walk in the Champs-Élysées and a few evenings at the theatre (amounting in all to one or two in the course of the winter) which they owed to free passes presented by some comrade or other.

But in the spring of the following year some overtime work was entrusted to Hector de Gribelin by his chief, for which he received the large sum of three hundred francs.

The day he brought the money home he said to his wife:

"My dear Henrietta, we must indulge in some sort of festivity—say an outing for the children."

And after a long discussion it was decided that they should go and lunch one day in the country.

"Well," cried Hector, "once will not break us, so we'll hire a wagonette for you, the children and the

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maid. And I'll have a saddle horse; the exercise will do me good."

The whole week long they talked of nothing but the projected excursion.

Every evening, on his return from the office, Hector caught up his elder son, put him astride his leg, and, making him bounce up and down as hard as he could, said:

"That's how daddy will gallop next Sunday."

And the youngster amused himself all day long by bestriding chairs, dragging them round the room and shouting:

"This is daddy on horseback!"

The servant herself gazed at her master with awe-struck eyes as she thought of him riding alongside the carriage, and at meal-times she listened with all her ears while he spoke of riding and recounted the exploits of his youth, when he lived at home with his father. Oh, he had learned in a good school, and once he felt his steed between his legs he feared nothing—nothing whatever!

Rubbing his hands, he repeated gaily to his wife:

"If only they would give me a restive animal I should be all the better pleased. You'll see how well I can ride; and if you like we'll come back by the Champs-Élysées just as all the people are returning from the Bois. As we shall make a good appearance, I shouldn't at all object to meeting some one from the ministry. That is all that is necessary to insure the respect of one's chiefs."

On the day appointed the carriage and the riding horse arrived at the same moment before the door. Hector went down immediately to examine his mount. He had had straps sewn to his trousers and

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flourished in his hand a whip he had bought the evening before.

He raised the horse's legs and felt them one after another, passed his hand over the animal's neck, flank and hocks, opened his mouth, examined his teeth, declared his age; and then, the whole household having collected round him, he delivered a discourse on the horse in general and the specimen before him in particular, pronouncing the latter excellent in every respect.

When the rest of the party had taken their seats in the carriage he examined the saddle-girth; then, putting his foot in the stirrup, he sprang to the saddle. The animal began to curvet and nearly threw his rider.

Hector, not altogether at his ease, tried to soothe him:

"Come, come, good horse, gently now!"

Then, when the horse had recovered his equanimity and the rider his nerve, the latter asked:

"Are you ready?"

The occupants of the carriage replied with one voice:

"Yes."

"Forward!" he commanded.

And the cavalcade set out.

All looks were centered on him. He trotted in the English style, rising unnecessarily high in the saddle, looking at times as if he were mounting into space. Sometimes he seemed on the point of falling forward on the horse's mane; his eyes were fixed, his face drawn, his cheeks pale.

His wife, holding one of the children on her

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knees, and the servant, who was carrying the other, continually cried out:

"Look at papa! look at papa!"

And the two boys, intoxicated by the motion of the carriage, by their delight and by the keen air, uttered shrill cries. The horse, frightened by the noise they made, started off at a gallop, and while Hector was trying to control his steed his hat fell off, and the driver had to get down and pick it up. When the equestrian had recovered it he called to his wife from a distance:

"Don't let the children shout like that! They'll make the horse bolt!"

They lunched on the grass in the Vésinet woods, having brought provisions with them in the carriage.

Although the driver was looking after the three horses, Hector rose every minute to see if his own lacked anything; he patted him on the neck and fed him with bread, cakes and sugar.

"He's an unequal trotter," he declared. "He certainly shook me up a little at first, but, as you saw, I soon got used to it. He knows his master now and won't give any more trouble."

As had been decided, they returned by the Champs-Élysées.

That spacious thoroughfare literally swarmed with vehicles of every kind, and on the sidewalks the pedestrians were so numerous that they looked like two indeterminate black ribbons unfurling their length from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde. A flood of sunlight played on this gay scene, making the varnish of the carriages, the steel of the harness and the handles of the carriage doors shine with dazzling brilliancy.

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An intoxication of life and motion seemed to have invaded this assemblage of human beings, carriages and horses. In the distance the outlines of the Obelisk could be discerned in a cloud of golden vapor.

As soon as Hector's horse had passed the Arc de Triomphe he became suddenly imbued with fresh energy, and, realizing that his stable was not far off, began to trot rapidly through the maze of wheels, despite all his rider's efforts to restrain him.

The carriage was now far behind. When the horse arrived opposite the Palais de l'Industrie he saw a clear field before him, and, turning to the right, set off at a gallop.

An old woman wearing an apron was crossing the road in leisurely fashion. She happened to be just in Hector's way as he arrived on the scene riding at full speed. Powerless to control his mount, he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Hi! Look out there! Hi!"

She must have been deaf, for she continued peacefully on her way until the awful moment when, struck by the horse's chest as by a locomotive under full steam, she rolled ten paces off, turning three somersaults on the way.

Voices yelled:

"Stop him!"

Hector, frantic with terror, clung to the horse's mane and shouted:

"Help! help!"

A terrible jolt hurled him, as if shot from a gun, over his horse's ears and cast him into the arms of a policeman who was running up to stop him.

In the space of a second a furious, gesticulating, vociferating group had gathered round him. An old

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gentleman with a white mustache, wearing a large round decoration, seemed particularly exasperated. He repeated:

"Confound it! When a man is as awkward as all that he should remain at home and not come killing people in the streets, if he doesn't know how to handle a horse."

Four men arrived on the scene, carrying the old woman. She appeared to be dead. Her skin was like parchment, her cap on one side and she was covered with dust.

"Take her to a druggist's," ordered the old gentleman, "and let us go to the commissary of police."

Hector started on his way with a policeman on either side of him, a third was leading his horse. A crowd followed them—and suddenly the wagonette appeared in sight. His wife alighted in consternation, the servant lost her head, the children whimpered. He explained that he would soon be at home, that he had knocked a woman down and that there was not much the matter. And his family, distracted with anxiety, went on their way.

When they arrived before the commissary the explanation took place in few words. He gave his name—Hector de Gribelin, employed at the Ministry of Marine; and then they awaited news of the injured woman. A policeman who had been sent to obtain information returned, saying that she had recovered consciousness, but was complaining of frightful internal pain. She was a charwoman, sixty-five years of age, named Madame Simon.

When he heard that she was not dead Hector regained hope and promised to defray her doctor's bill. Then he hastened to the druggist's. The door-

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way was thronged; the injured woman, huddled in an armchair, was groaning. Her arms hung at her sides, her face was drawn. Two doctors were still engaged in examining her. No bones were broken, but they feared some internal lesion.

Hector addressed her:

"Do you suffer much?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Where is the pain?"

"I feel as if my stomach were on fire."

A doctor approached.

"Are you the gentleman who caused the accident?"

"I am."

"This woman ought to be sent to a home. I know one where they would take her at six francs a day. Would you like me to send her there?"

Hector was delighted at the idea, thanked him and returned home much relieved.

His wife, dissolved in tears, was awaiting him. He reassured her.

"It's all right. This Madame Simon is better already and will be quite well in two or three days. I have sent her to a home. It's all right."

When he left his office the next day he went to inquire for Madame Simon. He found her eating rich soup with an air of great satisfaction.

"Well?" said he.

"Oh, sir," she replied, "I'm just the same. I feel sort of crushed—not a bit better."

The doctor declared they must wait and see; some complication or other might arise.

Hector waited three days, then he returned. The

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old woman, fresh-faced and clear-eyed, began to whine when she saw him:

"I can't move, sir; I can't move a bit. I shall be like this for the rest of my days."

A shudder passed through Hector's frame. He asked for the doctor, who merely shrugged his shoulders and said:

"What can I do? I can't tell what's wrong with her. She shrieks when they try to raise her. They can't even move her chair from one place to another without her uttering the most distressing cries. I am bound to believe what she tells me; I can't look into her inside. So long as I have no chance of seeing her walk I am not justified in supposing her to be telling lies about herself."

The old woman listened, motionless, a malicious gleam in her eyes.

A week passed, then a fortnight, then a month. Madame Simon did not leave her armchair. She ate from morning to night, grew fat, chatted gaily with the other patients and seemed to enjoy her immobility as if it were the rest to which she was entitled after fifty years of going up and down stairs, of turning mattresses, of carrying coal from one story to another, of sweeping and dusting.

Hector, at his wits' end, came to see her every day. Every day he found her calm and serene, declaring:

"I can't move, sir; I shall never be able to move again."

Every evening Madame de Gribelin, devoured with anxiety, said:

"How is Madame Simon?"

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And every time he replied with a resignation born of despair:

"Just the same; no change whatever."

They dismissed the servant, whose wages they could no longer afford. They economized more rigidly than ever. The whole of the extra pay had been swallowed up.

Then Hector summoned four noted doctors, who met in consultation over the old woman. She let them examine her, feel her, sound her, watching them the while with a cunning eye.

"We must make her walk," said one.

"But, sirs, I can't!" she cried. "I can't move!"

Then they took hold of her, raised her and dragged her a short distance, but she slipped from their grasp and fell to the floor, groaning and giving vent to such heartrending cries that they carried her back to her seat with infinite care and precaution.

They pronounced a guarded opinion—agreeing, however, that work was an impossibility to her.

And when Hector brought this news to his wife she sank on a chair, murmuring:

"It would be better to bring her here; it would cost us less."

He started in amazement.

"Here? In our own house? How can you think of such a thing?"

But she, resigned now to anything, replied with tears in her eyes:

"But what can we do, my love? It's not my fault!"

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THE lawyer had presented a plea of insanity. How could anyone explain this strange crime otherwise?

One morning, in the grass near Chatou, two bodies had been found, a man and a woman, well known, rich, no longer young and married since the preceding year, the woman having been a widow for three years before.

They were not known to have enemies; they had not been robbed. They seemed to have been thrown from the roadside into the river, after having been struck, one after the other, with a long iron spike.

The investigation revealed nothing. The boatmen, who had been questioned, knew nothing. The matter was about to be given up, when a young carpenter from a neighboring village, Georges Louis, nicknamed "the Bourgeois," gave himself up.

To all questions he only answered this:

"I had known the man for two years, the woman for six months. They often had me repair old furniture for them, because I am a clever workman."

And when he was asked:

"Why did you kill them?"

He would obstinately answer:

"I killed them because I wanted to kill them."

They could get nothing more out of him.

This man was undoubtedly an illegitimate child,

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put out to nurse and then abandoned. He had no other name than Georges Louis, but as on growing up he became particularly intelligent, with the good taste and native refinement which his acquaintances did not have, he was nicknamed "the Bourgeois," and he was never called otherwise. He had become remarkably clever in the trade of a carpenter, which he had taken up. He was also said to be a socialist fanatic, a believer in communistic and nihilistic doctrines, a great reader of bloodthirsty novels, an influential political agitator and a clever orator in the public meetings of workmen or of farmers.

* * * * *

His lawyer had pleaded insanity.

Indeed, how could one imagine that this workman should kill his best customers, rich and generous (as he knew), who in two years had enabled him to earn three thousand francs (his books showed it)? Only one explanation could be offered: insanity, the fixed idea of the unclassed individual who reeks vengeance on two *bourgeois*, on all the *bourgeoisie*, and the lawyer made a clever allusion to this nickname of "The Bourgeois," given throughout the neighborhood to this poor wretch. He exclaimed:

"Is this irony not enough to unbalance the mind of this poor wretch, who has neither father nor mother? He is an ardent republican. What am I saying? He even belongs to the same political party, the members of which, formerly shot or exiled by the government, it now welcomes with open arms—this party to which arson is a principle and murder an ordinary occurrence.

"These gloomy doctrines, now applauded in public meetings, have ruined this man. He has heard re-

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publicans—even women, yes, women—ask for the blood of M. Gambetta, the blood of M. Grévy; his weakened mind gave way; he wanted blood, the blood of a *bourgeois*!

“It is not he whom you should condemn, gentlemen; it is the Commune!”

Everywhere could be heard murmurs of assent. Everyone felt that the lawyer had won his case. The prosecuting attorney did not oppose him.

Then the presiding judge asked the accused the customary question:

“Prisoner, is there anything that you wish to add to your defense?”

The man stood up.

He was a short, flaxen blond, with calm, clear, gray eyes. A strong, frank, sonorous voice came from this frail-looking boy and, at the first words, quickly changed the opinion which had been formed of him.

He spoke loud in a declamatory manner, but so distinctly that every word could be understood in the farthest corners of the big hall:

“Your honor, as I do not wish to go to an insane asylum, and as I even prefer death to that, I will tell everything.

“I killed this man and this woman because they were my parents.

“Now, listen, and judge me.

“A woman, having given birth to a boy, sent him out, somewhere, to a nurse. Did she even know where her accomplice carried this innocent little being, condemned to eternal misery, to the shame of an illegitimate birth; to more than that—to death, since he was abandoned and the nurse, no longer re-

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ceiving the monthly pension, might, as they often do, let him die of hunger and neglect!

"The woman who nursed me was honest, better, more noble, more of a mother than my own mother. She brought me up. She did wrong in doing her duty. It is more humane to let them die, these little wretches who are cast away in suburban villages just as garbage is thrown away.

"I grew up with the indistinct impression that I was carrying some burden of shame. One day the other children called me a 'b——.' They did not know the meaning of this word, which one of them had heard at home. I was also ignorant of its meaning, but I felt the sting all the same.

"I was, I may say, one of the cleverest boys in the school. I would have been a good man, your honor, perhaps a man of superior intellect, if my parents had not committed the crime of abandoning me.

"This crime was committed against me. I was the victim, they were the guilty ones. I was defenseless, they were pitiless. Their duty was to love me, they rejected me.

"I owed them life—but is life a boon? To me, at any rate, it was a misfortune. After their shameful desertion, I owed them only vengeance. They committed against me the most inhuman, the most infamous, the most monstrous crime which can be committed against a human creature.

"A man who has been insulted, strikes; a man who has been robbed, takes back his own by force. A man who has been deceived, played upon, tortured, kills; a man who has been slapped, kills; a man who has been dishonored, kills. I have been

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robbed, deceived, tortured, morally slapped, dishonored, all this to a greater degree than those whose anger you excuse.

"I revenged myself, I killed. It was my legitimate right. I took their happy life in exchange for the terrible one which they had forced on me.

"You will call me parricide! Were these people my parents, for whom I was an abominable burden, a terror, an infamous shame; for whom my birth was a calamity and my life a threat of disgrace? They sought a selfish pleasure; they got an unexpected child. They suppressed the child. My turn came to do the same for them.

"And yet, up to quite recently, I was ready to love them.

"As I have said, this man, my father, came to me for the first time two years ago. I suspected nothing. He ordered two pieces of furniture. I found out, later on, that, under the seal of secrecy, naturally, he had sought information from the priest.

"He returned often. He gave me a lot of work and paid me well. Sometimes he would even talk to me of one thing or another. I felt a growing affection for him.

"At the beginning of this year he brought with him his wife, my mother. When she entered she was trembling so that I thought her to be suffering from some nervous disease. Then she asked for a seat and a glass of water. She said nothing; she looked around abstractedly at my work and only answered 'yes' and 'no,' at random, to all the questions which he asked her. When she had left I thought her a little unbalanced.

"The following month they returned. She was

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calm, self-controlled. That day they chattered for a long time, and they left me a rather large order. I saw her three more times, without suspecting anything. But one day she began to talk to me of my life, of my childhood, of my parents. I answered: 'Madame, my parents were wretches who deserted me.' Then she clutched at her heart and fell, unconscious. I immediately thought: 'She is my mother!' but I took care not to let her notice anything. I wished to observe her.

"I, in turn, sought out information about them. I learned that they had been married since last July, my mother having been a widow for only three years. There had been rumors that they had loved each other during the lifetime of the first husband, but there was no proof of it. I was the proof—the proof which they had at first hidden and then hoped to destroy.

"I waited. She returned one evening, escorted as usual by my father. That day she seemed deeply moved, I don't know why. Then, as she was leaving, she said to me: 'I wish you success, because you seem to me to be honest and a hard worker; some day you will undoubtedly think of getting married. I have come to help you to choose freely the woman who may suit you. I was married against my inclination once and I know what suffering it causes. Now I am rich, childless, free, mistress of my fortune. Here is your dowry.'

"She held out to me a large, sealed envelope.

"I looked her straight in the eyes and then said: 'Are you my mother?'

"She drew back a few steps and hid her face in her hands so as not to see me. He, the man, my

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father, supported her in his arms and cried out to me: 'You must be crazy!'

"I answered: 'Not in the least. I know that you are my parents. I cannot be thus deceived. Admit it and I will keep the secret; I will bear you no ill will; I will remain what I am, a carpenter.'

"He retreated towards the door, still supporting his wife who was beginning to sob. Quickly I locked the door, put the key in my pocket and continued: 'Look at her and dare to deny that she is my mother.'

"Then he flew into a passion, very pale, terrified at the thought that the scandal, which had so far been avoided, might suddenly break out; that their position, their good name, their honor might all at once be lost. He stammered out: 'You are a rascal, you wish to get money from us! That's the thanks we get for trying to help such common people!'

"My mother, bewildered, kept repeating: 'Let's get out of here, let's get out!'

"Then, when he found the door locked, he exclaimed: 'If you do not open this door immediately, I will have you thrown into prison for blackmail and assault!'

"I had remained calm; I opened the door and saw them disappear in the darkness.

"Then I seemed to have been suddenly orphaned, deserted, pushed to the wall. I was seized with an overwhelming sadness, mingled with anger, hatred, disgust; my whole being seemed to rise up in revolt against the injustice, the meanness, the dishonor, the rejected love. I began to run, in order to overtake them along the Seine, which they had to follow in order to reach the station of Chaton.

A PARRICIDE

"I soon caught up with them. It was now pitch dark. I was creeping up behind them softly, that they might not hear me. My mother was still crying. My father was saying: 'It's all your own fault. Why did you wish to see him? It was absurd in our position. We could have helped him from afar, without showing ourselves. Of what use are these dangerous visits, since we can't recognize him?'"

"Then I rushed up to them, beseeching. I cried: 'You see! You *are* my parents. You have already rejected me once; would you repulse me again?'"

"Then, your honor, he struck me. I swear it on my honor, before the law and my country. He struck me, and as I seized him by the collar, he drew from his pocket a revolver.

"The blood rushed to my head, I no longer knew what I was doing, I had my compass in my pocket; I struck him with it as often as I could.

"Then she began to cry: 'Help! murder!' and to pull my beard. It seems that I killed her also. How do I know what I did then?"

"Then, when I saw them both lying on the ground, without thinking, I threw them into the Seine.

"That's all. Now sentence me."

The prisoner sat down. After this revelation the case was carried over to the following session. It comes up very soon. If we were jurymen, what would we do with this parricide?

IN THE WOOD

AS the mayor was about to sit down to breakfast, word was brought to him that the rural policeman, with two prisoners, was awaiting him at the Hotel de Ville. He went there at once and found old Hochedur standing guard before a middle-class couple whom he was regarding with a severe expression on his face.

The man, a fat old fellow with a red nose and white hair, seemed utterly dejected; while the woman, a little roundabout individual with shining cheeks, looked at the official who had arrested them, with defiant eyes.

"What is it? What is it, Hochedur?"

The rural policeman made his deposition: He had gone out that morning at his usual time, in order to patrol his beat from the forest of Champioux as far as the boundaries of Argenteuil. He had not noticed anything unusual in the country except that it was a fine day, and that the wheat was doing well, when the son of old Bredel, who was going over his vines, called out to him: "Here, Daddy Hochedur, go and have a look at the outskirts of the wood. In the first thicket you will find a pair of pigeons who must be a hundred and thirty years old between them!"

He went in the direction indicated, entered the thicket, and there he heard words which made him

IN THE WOOD

suspect a flagrant breach of morality. Advancing, therefore, on his hands and knees as if to surprise a poacher, he had arrested the couple whom he found there.

The mayor looked at the culprits in astonishment, for the man was certainly sixty, and the woman fifty-five at least, and he began to question them, beginning with the man, who replied in such a weak voice that he could scarcely be heard.

"What is your name?"

"Nicholas Beaurain."

"Your occupation?"

"Haberdasher, in the Rue des Martyrs, in Paris."

"What were you doing in the wood?"

The haberdasher remained silent, with his eyes on his fat paunch, and his hands hanging at his sides, and the mayor continued:

"Do you deny what the officer of the municipal authorities states?"

"No, monsieur."

"So you confess it?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What have you to say in your defence?"

"Nothing, monsieur."

"Where did you meet the partner in your misdemeanor?"

"She is my wife, monsieur."

"Your wife?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then—then—you do not live together—in Paris?"

"I beg your pardon, monsieur, but we are living together!"

"But in that case—you must be mad, altogether

IN THE WOOD

mad, my dear sir, to get caught playing lovers in the country at ten o'clock in the morning."

The haberdasher seemed ready to cry with shame, and he muttered: "It was she who enticed me! I told her it was very stupid, but when a woman once gets a thing into her head—you know—you cannot get it out."

The mayor, who liked a joke, smiled and replied: "In your case, the contrary ought to have happened. You would not be here, if she had had the idea only in her head."

Then Monsieur Beauvain was seized with rage, and turning to his wife, he said: "Do you see to what you have brought us with your poetry? And now we shall have to go before the courts at our age, for a breach of morals! And we shall have to shut up the shop, sell our good will, and go to some other neighborhood! That's what it has come to."

Madame Beaurain got up, and without looking at her husband, she explained herself without embarrassment, without useless modesty, and almost without hesitation.

"Of course, monsieur, I know that we have made ourselves ridiculous. Will you allow me to plead my cause like an advocate, or rather like a poor woman? And I hope that you will be kind enough to send us home, and to spare us the disgrace of a prosecution.

"Years ago, when I was young, I made Monsieur Beaurain's acquaintance one Sunday in this neighborhood. He was employed in a draper's shop, and I was a saleswoman in a ready-made clothing establishment. I remember it as if it were yesterday. I used to come and spend Sundays here occasionally

IN THE WOOD

with a friend of mine, Rose Levèque, with whom I lived in the Rue Pigalle, and Rose had a sweet-heart, while I had none. He used to bring us here, and one Saturday he told me laughing that he should bring a friend with him the next day. I quite understood what he meant, but I replied that it would be no good; for I was virtuous, monsieur.

"The next day we met Monsieur Beaurain at the railway station, and in those days he was good-looking, but I had made up my mind not to encourage him, and I did not. Well, we arrived at Bezons. It was a lovely day, the sort of day that touches your heart. When it is fine even now, just as it used to be formerly, I grow quite foolish, and when I am in the country I utterly lose my head. The green grass, the swallows flying so swiftly, the smell of the grass, the scarlet poppies, the daisies, all that makes me crazy. It is like champagne when one is not accustomed to it!

"Well, it was lovely weather, warm and bright, and it seemed to penetrate your body through your eyes when you looked, and through your mouth when you breathed. Rose and Simon hugged and kissed each other every minute, and that gave me a queer feeling! Monsieur Beaurain and I walked behind them, without speaking much, for when people do not know each other, they do not find anything to talk about. He looked timid, and I liked to see his embarrassment. At last we got to the little wood; it was as cool as in a bath there, and we four sat down. Rose and her lover teased me because I looked rather stern, but you will understand that I could not be otherwise. And then they began to kiss and hug again, without putting any

IN THE WOOD

more restraint upon themselves than if we had not been there; and then they whispered together, and got up and went off among the trees, without saying a word. You may fancy what I looked like, alone with this young fellow whom I saw for the first time. I felt so confused at seeing them go that it gave me courage, and I began to talk. I asked him what his business was, and he said he was a linen draper's assistant, as I told you just now. We talked for a few minutes, and that made him bold, and he wanted to kiss me, but I told him sharply to keep his place. Is not that true, Monsieur Beaurain?"

Monsieur Beaurain, who was looking at his feet in confusion, did not reply, and she continued: "Then he saw that I was modest, and he began to make love to me nicely, like an honorable man, and from that time he came every Sunday, for he was very much in love with me. I was very fond of him also, very fond of him! He was a good-looking fellow, formerly, and in short he married me the next September, and we started in business in the Rue des Martyrs.

"It was a hard struggle for some years, monsieur. Business did not prosper, and we could not afford many country excursions, and, besides, we had got out of the way of them. One has other things in one's head, and thinks more of the cash box than of pretty speeches, when one is in business. We were growing old by degrees without perceiving it, like quiet people who do not think much about love. One does not regret anything as long as one does not notice what one has lost.

"And then, monsieur, business became better, and

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we were tranquil as to the future! Then, you see, I do not exactly know what went on in my mind, no, I really do not know, but I began to dream like a little boarding-school girl. The sight of the little carts full of flowers which are drawn about the streets made me cry; the smell of violets sought me out in my easy-chair, behind my cash box, and made my heart beat! Then I would get up and go out on the doorstep to look at the blue sky between the roofs. When one looks up at the sky from the street, it looks like a river which is descending on Paris, winding as it flows, and the swallows pass to and fro in it like fish. These ideas are very stupid at my age! But how can one help it, monsieur, when one has worked all one's life? A moment comes in which one perceives that one could have done something else, and that one regrets, oh! yes, one feels intense regret! Just think, for twenty years I might have gone and had kisses in the woods, like other women. I used to think how delightful it would be to lie under the trees and be in love with some one! And I thought of it every day and every night! I dreamed of the moonlight on the water, until I felt inclined to drown myself.

"I did not venture to speak to Monsieur Beaurain about this at first. I knew that he would make fun of me, and send me back to sell my needles and cotton! And then, to speak the truth, Monsieur Beaurain never said much to me, but when I looked in the glass, I also understood quite well that I no longer appealed to any one!

"Well, I made up my mind, and I proposed to him an excursion into the country, to the place where we had first become acquainted. He agreed

IN THE WOOD

without mistrusting anything, and we arrived here this morning, about nine o'clock.

"I felt quite young again when I got among the wheat, for a woman's heart never grows old! And really, I no longer saw my husband as he is at present, but just as he was formerly! That I will swear to you, monsieur. As true as I am standing here I was crazy. I began to kiss him, and he was more surprised than if I had tried to murder him. He kept saying to me: 'Why, you must be mad! You are mad this morning! What is the matter with you?' I did not listen to him, I only listened to my own heart, and I made him come into the wood with me. That is all. I have spoken the truth, Monsieur le Maire, the whole truth."

The mayor was a sensible man. He rose from his chair, smiled, and said: "Go in peace, madame, and when you again visit our forests, be more discreet."

LOVE

PAGES FROM A SPORTSMAN'S BOOK

I HAVE just read a drama of passion among the general news items in one of the daily papers. He first killed her and then committed suicide, showing that he must have loved her. What matter who the actors were? Their love alone interests me—not because it moves or surprises me, or because it softens me or makes me think, but because it recalls to my mind a remembrance of my youth, a strange recollection of a hunting adventure where love appeared to me as the cross appeared in the sky to the early Christians.

I was born with all the instincts and the senses of primitive man, tempered by the reasoning power and the feelings of a civilized being. I am passionately fond of shooting, and the sight of the wounded animal, with blood on its feathers and on my hands, affects my heart so that it almost stops beating.

That year the cold weather set in suddenly toward the end of autumn, and I was invited by one of my cousins, Karl de Rauville, to go with him duck shooting on the marshes, at daybreak.

My cousin, a jolly fellow of forty, with red hair, very stout and bearded, a country gentleman, an amiable semi-brute, with a happy disposition and endowed with that Gallic wit which makes even

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mediocrity agreeable, lived in a house, half farmhouse, half château, situated in a broad valley through which a river ran. The hills right and left were covered with woods, old seignorial woods where magnificent trees still remained, and where the rarest feathered game in that part of France was to be found. Eagles were shot there occasionally, and birds of passage, those which rarely come into our over-populated part of the country, almost infallibly stopped amid these branches, which were centuries old, as if they knew or recognized a little corner of an ancient forest which had remained there to serve them as a shelter during their brief nocturnal halt.

In the valley there were large meadows watered by trenches and separated by hedges; farther on, the river, which up to that point had been canalized, expanded into a vast marsh. That marsh, which was the best shooting ground I ever saw, was my cousin's chief care; he kept it like a park. Among the rushes that covered it and made it a living, rustling, noisy spot, narrow passages had been made, through which flat-bottomed boats, impelled and steered by poles, passed along silently over the stagnant water, brushed up against the reeds, and made the swift fish take refuge among the weeds, and frightened the wild fowl, whose pointed, black heads disappeared suddenly as they dived.

I am passionately fond of the water, of the sea, although it is too vast, too restless, too impossible to hold; of the rivers which are so beautiful, but which pass on, flow away, and are gone; and, above all, of the marshes, where the whole unknown existence of aquatic animals palpitates. The marsh is an

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entire world to itself on this earth, a different world, which has its own life, its settled inhabitants, and its passing travelers, its voices, its noises, and, above all, its mystery. Nothing is more disturbing, nothing more disquieting, more terrifying occasionally, than a fen. Why should this terror hang over these low plains covered with water? Is it the vague rustling of the rushes, the strange will-o'-the-wisps, the profound silence which envelops them on calm nights, or is it the strange mists which hang over the rushes like a shroud? Or else is it the imperceptible plashing, so slight and so gentle, and sometimes more terrifying than the cannon of men or the thunders of skies, which make these marshes resemble the lands of one's dreams, fearsome countries concealing an unknown and dangerous secret?

No, something else belongs to it, another mystery, more profound and graver, floats amid these thick mists, perhaps the mystery of creation itself! For was it not in stagnant and muddy water, amid the heavy humidity of moist land under the heat of the sun, that the first germ of life stirred, vibrated and expanded to the day?

I arrived at my cousin's in the evening. It was freezing hard enough to split stones.

In the large room whose sideboards, walls, and ceiling were covered with stuffed birds with extended wings, or perched on branches to which they were nailed, hawks, herons, owls, nightjars, buzzards, tercel's, vultures, falcons, my cousin, who himself resembled some strange animal from a cold country, dressed in a sealskin jacket, told me during dinner what preparations he had made for that same night.

LOVE

We were to start at half-past three in the morning, so as to arrive at the place which he had chosen for our watching place at about half-past four. On that spot a hut had been built of pieces of ice, so as to shelter us somewhat from the terrible wind which precedes daybreak, that wind which is so cold that it lacerates the flesh as if with a saw, cuts it like the blade of a knife, and wounds it as with a poisoned dart, twists it like a pair of pincers, and burns it like fire.

My cousin rubbed his hands: "I have never known such a frost," he said. "It is already twelve degrees below zero at six o'clock in the evening."

I threw myself on my bed immediately after we had finished our meal, and I went to sleep by the light of a bright fire burning in the grate.

At three o'clock he woke me. In my turn, I put on a sheepskin, and found my Cousin Karl covered with a bearskin. After having swallowed two cups of scalding coffee apiece, followed by two glasses of brandy, we started, accompanied by a gamekeeper and our dogs, Pongeon and Pierrot.

From the first moment that I got outside I felt chilled to the very marrow. It was one of those nights on which the earth seems dead with cold. The frozen air becomes resistant and palpable, such pain does it cause; no breath of wind moves it, it is fixed and motionless; it bites, pierces through you, dries and kills the trees, the plants, the insects, the small birds themselves, that fall from the branches on to the hard ground, and become hard themselves under the grip of the cold.

The moon, which was in her last quarter and was inclining to one side, seemed to be fainting in

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the midst of space, and so weak that she was unable to take her departure, and thus remained up yonder, also overcome and paralyzed by the severity of the weather. She shed a cold, mournful light over the world, that dying and wan light which she gives us every month, at the end of her resurrection.

Karl and I went side by side, our backs bent, our hands in our pockets, and our guns under our arms. Our boots, which were wrapped in wool so that we might be able to walk without slipping on the frozen river, made no sound, and I looked at the white vapor of our dogs' breath.

We were soon on the edge of the marsh, and we went into one of those lanes of dry rushes which ran through this low forest.

Our elbows, which touched the long, ribbon-like leaves, made a slight noise, and I was seized, as I had never been before, by the powerful, singular emotion which marshes cause in me. This marsh was dead, dead from cold, for we were walking on it, amid its population of dried rushes.

Suddenly, at the turn of one of the lanes, I perceived the ice hut which had been constructed to shelter us. I went in, and as we had nearly an hour to wait before the wandering birds would awake, I rolled myself up in my rug in order to try and get warm.

Then, lying on my back, I began to look at the misshapen moon, which had four horns through the semi-transparent walls of this polar house.

But the frost of the frozen marshes, the cold of these walls, the cold from the firmament penetrated me so terribly that I began to cough.

My Cousin Karl became uneasy. "It will be

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bad if we do not kill much to-day," he said. "I do not want you to catch cold; we will light a fire." And he told the gamekeeper to cut some rushes.

We made a pile in the middle of our hut, which had a hole in the middle of the roof to let out the smoke, and when the red flames rose up, the clear crystal chunks began to melt gently, imperceptibly, as if these stones of ice were sweating. Karl, who had remained outside, called to me: "Come and look here!" I went out of the hut, and remained struck with astonishment. Our hut, in the shape of a cone, looked like an enormous diamond with a heart of fire, which had been suddenly planted there in the midst of the frozen water of the marsh. And inside we saw two fantastic forms, those of our dogs, who were warming themselves at the fire.

But a peculiar cry, a lost, wandering cry, passed over our heads, and the light from our hearth showed us the wild birds. Nothing moves one so much as the first clamor of life which one does not see, and which is passing through the sombre air so quickly and so far off, before the first streak of the winter's day appears on the horizon. It seems to me at this glacial hour of dawn, as if that passing cry which is carried away by the wings of a bird is the sigh of the soul of the world!

"Put out the fire," said Karl. "It is getting daylight."

The sky was, in fact, beginning to grow pale, and the flights of duck made long, rapid streaks on the sky, which were soon obliterated.

A stream of light burst out into the night. Karl had fired, and the two dogs ran forward.

And then, almost every minute, first he, then I,

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aimed rapidly as soon as the shadow of a flying flock appeared above the rushes. And Pierrot and Plongeon, out of breath but happy, retrieved the bleeding birds, whose eyes, occasionally, still looked at us.

The sun had risen; it was a bright day with a blue sky, and we were thinking of taking our departure, when two birds with extended necks and outstretched wings glided rapidly over our heads. I fired, and one of them fell almost at my feet. It was a teal, with a silver breast, and then, in the blue space above me, I heard a voice, the voice of a bird. It was a short, repeated, heartrending lament; and the bird, the little animal that had been spared, began to circle round in the blue sky, above our heads, looking at its dead companion which I was holding in my hand.

Karl was on his knees, his gun to his shoulder, watching it eagerly, until it should be within gunshot. "You have killed the duck," he said, "and the drake will not fly away."

He certainly did not fly away; he circled over our heads continually and continued his cries. Never had any groans of suffering pained me so much as that desolate appeal, as that lamentable reproach of this poor bird which was lost in space.

Occasionally he would fly off, under the menace of the gun which followed his flight, and seemed ready to continue his flight alone; but, as he could not make up his mind to this, he soon returned to find his mate.

"Leave her on the ground," Karl said to me; "he will come within gunshot by and by." And he did indeed come near us, careless of danger, in-

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fatuated by his animal love, by his affection for that other animal which I had just killed.

Karl fired, and it was as if somebody had cut the string which held the bird suspended. I saw something black descend, and I heard the noise of a fall among the rushes. And Pierrot brought it to me.

I put them—they were already cold—into the same game bag, and I returned to Paris that evening.

THE DONKEY

THERE was not a breath of air stirring; a heavy mist was lying over the river. It was like a layer of cotton placed on the water. The banks themselves were indistinct, hidden behind strange fogs. But day was breaking and the hill was becoming visible. In the dawning light of day the plaster houses began to appear like white spots. Cocks were crowing in the barnyard.

On the other side of the river, hidden behind the fogs, just opposite Frette, a slight noise from time to time broke the dead silence of the quiet morning. At times it was an indistinct plashing, like the cautious advance of a boat, then again a sharp noise like the rattle of an oar and then the sound of something dropping in the water. Then silence.

Sometimes whispered words, coming perhaps from a distance, perhaps from quite near, pierced through these opaque mists. They passed by like wild birds which have slept in the rushes and which fly away at the first light of day, crossing the mist and uttering a low and timid sound which wakes their brothers along the shores.

Suddenly along the bank, near the village, a barely perceptible shadow appeared on the water. Then it grew, became more distinct and, coming out of the foggy curtain which hung over the river, a flat-boat, manned by two men, pushed up on the grass.

THE DONKEY

The one who was rowing rose and took a pailful of fish from the bottom of the boat, then he threw the dripping net over his shoulder. His companion, who had not made a motion, exclaimed: "Say, Mailloche, get your gun and see if we can't land some rabbit along the shore."

The other one answered: "All right. I'll be with you in a minute." Then he disappeared, in order to hide their catch.

The man who had stayed in the boat slowly filled his pipe and lighted it. His name was Labouise, but he was called Chicot, and was in partnership with Maillochon, commonly called Mailloche, to practice the doubtful and undefined profession of junk-gatherers along the shore.

They were a low order of sailors and they navigated regularly only in the months of famine. The rest of the time they acted as junk-gatherers. Rowing about on the river day and night, watching for any prey, dead or alive, poachers on the water and nocturnal hunters, sometimes ambushing venison in the Saint-Germain forests, sometimes looking for drowned people and searching their clothes, picking up floating rags and empty bottles; thus did Labouise and Maillochon live easily.

At times they would set out on foot about noon and stroll along straight ahead. They would dine in some inn on the shore and leave again side by side. They would remain away for a couple of days; then one morning they would be seen rowing about in the tub which they called their boat.

At Joinville or at Nogent some boatman would be looking for his boat, which had disappeared one night, probably stolen, while twenty or thirty miles

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from there, on the Oise, some shopkeeper would be rubbing his hands, congratulating himself on the bargain he had made when he bought a boat the day before for fifty francs, which two men offered him as they were passing.

Maillochon reappeared with his gun wrapped up in rags. He was a man of forty or fifty, tall and thin, with the restless eye of people who are worried by legitimate troubles and of hunted animals. His open shirt showed his hairy chest, but he seemed never to have had any more hair on his face than a short brush of a mustache and a few stiff hairs under his lower lip. He was bald around the temples. When he took off the dirty cap that he wore his scalp seemed to be covered with a fluffy down, like the body of a plucked chicken.

Chicot, on the contrary, was red, fat, short and hairy. He looked like a raw beefsteak. He continually kept his left eye closed, as if he were aiming at something or at somebody, and when people jokingly cried to him, "Open your eye, Labouise!" he would answer quietly: "Never fear, sister, I open it when there's cause to."

He had a habit of calling every one "sister," even his scavenger companion.

He took up the oars again, and once more the boat disappeared in the heavy mist, which was now turned snowy white in the pink-tinted sky.

"What kind of lead did you take, Maillochon?" Labouise asked.

"Very small, number nine; that's the best for rabbits."

They were approaching the other shore so slowly, so quietly that no noise betrayed them. This bank

THE DONKEY

belongs to the Saint-Germain forest and is the boundary line for rabbit hunting. It is covered with burrows hidden under the roots of trees, and the creatures at daybreak frisk about, running in and out of the holes.

Maillochon was kneeling in the bow, watching, his gun hidden on the floor. Suddenly he seized it, aimed, and the report echoed for some time throughout the quiet country.

Labouise, in a few strokes, touched the beach, and his companion, jumping to the ground, picked up a little gray rabbit, not yet dead.

Then the boat once more disappeared into the fog in order to get to the other side, where it could keep away from the game wardens.

The two men seemed to be riding easily on the water. The weapon had disappeared under the board which served as a hiding place and the rabbit was stuffed into Chicot's loose shirt.

After about a quarter of an hour Labouise asked: "Well, sister, shall we get one more?"

"It will suit me," Maillochon answered.

The boat started swiftly down the current. The mist, which was hiding both shores, was beginning to rise. The trees could be barely perceived, as through a veil, and the little clouds of fog were floating up from the water. When they drew near the island, the end of which is opposite Herblay, the two men slackened their pace and began to watch. Soon a second rabbit was killed.

Then they went down until they were half way to Conflans. Here they stopped their boat, tied it to a tree and went to sleep in the bottom of it.

From time to time Labouise would sit up and look

THE DONKEY

over the horizon with his open eye. The last of the morning mist had disappeared and the large summer sun was climbing in the blue sky.

On the other side of the river the vineyard-covered hill stretched out in a semicircle. One house stood out alone at the summit. Everything was silent.

Something was moving slowly along the tow-path, advancing with difficulty. It was a woman dragging a donkey. The stubborn, stiff-jointed beast occasionally stretched out a leg in answer to its companion's efforts, and it proceeded thus, with outstretched neck and ears lying flat, so slowly that one could not tell when it would ever be out of sight.

The woman, bent double, was pulling, turning round occasionally to strike the donkey with a stick.

As soon as he saw her, Labouise exclaimed: "Say, Mailloche!"

Mailloche answered: "What's the matter?"

"Want to have some fun?"

"Of course!"

"Then hurry, sister; we're going to have a laugh."

Chicot took the oars. When he had crossed the river he stopped opposite the woman and called: "Hey, sister!"

The woman stopped dragging her donkey and looked.

Labouise continued: "What are you doing—going to the locomotive show?"

The woman made no reply. Chicot continued: "Say, your trotter's prime for a race. Where are you taking him at that speed?"

At last the woman answered: "I'm going to Macquart, at Champioux, to have him killed. He's worthless."

THE DONKEY

Labouise answered: "You're right. How much do you think Macquart will give you for him?"

The woman wiped her forehead on the back of her hand and hesitated, saying: "How do I know? Perhaps three francs, perhaps four."

Chicot exclaimed: "I'll give you five francs and your errand's done! How's that?"

The woman considered the matter for a second and then exclaimed: "Done!"

The two men landed. Labouise grasped the animal by the bridle. Maillochon asked in surprise: "What do you expect to do with that carcass?"

Chicot this time opened his other eye in order to express his gaiety. His whole red face was grinning with joy. He chuckled: "Don't worry, sister. I've got my idea."

He gave five francs to the woman, who then sat down by the road to see what was going to happen. Then Labouise, in great humor, got the gun and held it out to Maillochon, saying: "Each one in turn; we're going after big game, sister. Don't get so near or you'll kill it right away! You must make the pleasure last a little."

He placed his companion about forty paces from the victim. The ass, feeling itself free, was trying to get a little of the tall grass, but it was so exhausted that it swayed on its legs as if it were about to fall.

Maillochon aimed slowly and said: "A little pepper for the ears; watch, Chicot!" And he fired.

The tiny shot struck the donkey's long ears and he began to shake them in order to get rid of the stinging sensation. The two men were doubled up with laughter and stamped their feet with joy. The

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woman, indignant, rushed forward; she did not want her donkey to be tortured, and she offered to return the five francs. Labouise threatened her with a thrashing and pretended to roll up his sleeves. He had paid, hadn't he? Well, then, he would take a shot at her skirts, just to show that it didn't hurt. She went away, threatening to call the police. They could hear her protesting indignantly and cursing as she went her way.

Maillochon held out the gun to his comrade, saying: "It's your turn, Chicot."

Labouise aimed and fired. The donkey received the charge in his thighs, but the shot was so small and came from such a distance that he thought he was being stung by flies, for he began to thrash himself with his tail.

Labouise sat down to laugh more comfortably, while Maillochon reloaded the weapon, so happy that he seemed to sneeze into the barrel. He stepped forward a few paces, and, aiming at the same place that his friend had shot at, he fired again. This time the beast started, tried to kick and turned its head. At last a little blood was running. It had been wounded and felt a sharp pain, for it tried to run away with a slow, limping, jerky gallop.

Both men darted after the beast, Maillochon with a long stride, Labouise with the short, breathless trot of a little man. But the donkey, tired out, had stopped, and, with a bewildered look, was watching his two murderers approach. Suddenly he stretched his neck and began to bray.

Labouise, out of breath, had taken the gun. This time he walked right up close, as he did not wish to begin the chase over again.

THE DONKEY

When the poor beast had finished its mournful cry, like a last call for help, the man called: "Hey, Mailloche! Come here, sister; I'm going to give him some medicine." And while the other man was forcing the animal's mouth open, Chicot stuck the barrel of his gun down its throat, as if he were trying to make it drink a potion. Then he said: "Look out, sister, here she goes!"

He pressed the trigger. The donkey stumbled back a few steps, fell down, tried to get up again and finally lay on its side and closed its eyes. The whole body was trembling, its legs were kicking as if it were trying to run. A stream of blood was oozing through its teeth. Soon it stopped moving. It was dead.

The two men went along, laughing. It was over too quickly; they had not had their money's worth. Maillochon asked: "Well, what are we going to do now?"

Labouise answered: "Don't worry, sister. Get the thing on the boat; we're going to have some fun when night comes."

They went and got the boat. The animal's body was placed on the bottom, covered with fresh grass, and the two men stretched out on it and went to sleep.

Toward noon Labouise drew a bottle of wine, some bread and butter and raw onions from a hiding place in their muddy, worm-eaten boat, and they began to eat.

When the meal was over they once more stretched out on the dead donkey and slept. At nightfall Labouise awoke and shook his comrade, who was snoring like a buzz-saw. "Come on, sister," he ordered.

THE DONKEY

Maillochon began to row. As they had plenty of time they went up the Seine slowly. They coasted along the reaches covered with water-lilies, and the heavy, mud-covered boat slipped over the lily pads and bent the flowers, which stood up again as soon as they had passed.

When they reached the wall of the Éperon, which separates the Saint-Germain forest from the Maisons-Laffitte Park, Labouise stopped his companion and explained his idea to him. Maillochon was moved by a prolonged, silent laugh.

They threw into the water the grass which had covered the body, took the animal by the feet and hid it behind some bushes. Then they got into their boat again and went to Maisons-Laffitte.

The night was perfectly black when they reached the wine shop of old man Jules. As soon as the dealer saw them he came up, shook hands with them and sat down at their table. They began to talk of one thing and another. By eleven o'clock the last customer had left and old man Jules winked at Labouise and asked: "Well, have you got any?"

Labouise made a motion with his head and answered: "Perhaps so, perhaps not!"

The dealer insisted: "Perhaps you've got nothing but gray ones?"

Chicot dug his hands into his flannel shirt, drew out the ears of a rabbit and declared: "Three francs a pair!"

Then began a long discussion about the price. Two francs sixty-five and the two rabbits were delivered. As the two men were getting up to go, old man Jules, who had been watching them, exclaimed: "You have something else, but you won't say what."

THE DONKEY

Labouise answered: "Possibly, but it is not for you; you're too stingy."

The man, growing eager, kept asking: "What is it? Something big? Perhaps we might make a deal."

Labouise, who seemed perplexed, pretended to consult Maillochon with a glance. Then he answered in a slow voice: "This is how it is. We were in the bushes at Éperon when something passed right near us, to the left, at the end of the wall. Mailloche takes a shot and it drops. We skipped on account of the game people. I can't tell you what it is, because I don't know. But it's big enough. But what is it? If I told you I'd be lying, and you know, sister, between us everything's aboveboard."

Anxiously the man asked: "Think it's venison?"

Labouise answered: "Might be and then again it might not! Venison?—uh! uh!—might be a little big for that! Mind you, I don't say it's a doe, because I don't know, but it might be."

Still the dealer insisted: "Perhaps it's a buck?"

Labouise stretched out his hand, exclaiming: "No, it's not that! It's not a buck. I should have seen the horns. No, it's not a buck!"

"Why didn't you bring it with you?" asked the man.

"Because, sister, from now on I sell from where I stand. Plenty of people will buy. All you have to do is to take a walk over there, find the thing and take it. No risk for me."

The innkeeper, growing suspicious, exclaimed: "Supposing he wasn't there!"

Labouise once more raised his hand and said: "He's there, I swear!—first bush to the left. What

THE DONKEY

it is, I don't know. But it's not a buck, I'm positive. It's for you to find out what it is. Twenty-five francs, cash down!"

Still the man hesitated: "Couldn't you bring it?"

Maillochon exclaimed: "No, indeed! You know our price! Take it or leave it!"

The dealer decided: "It's a bargain for twenty francs!"

And they shook hands over the deal.

Then he took out four big five-franc pieces from the cash drawer, and the two friends pocketed the money. Labouise arose, emptied his glass and left. As he was disappearing in the shadows he turned round to exclaim: "It isn't a buck. I don't know what it is!—but it's there. I'll give you back your money if you find nothing!"

And he disappeared in the darkness. Maillochon, who was following him, kept punching him in the back to express his joy.

THE CORSICAN BANDIT

THE road ascended gently through the forest of Aitone. The large pines formed a solemn dome above our heads, and that mysterious sound made by the wind in the trees sounded like the notes of an organ.

After walking for three hours, there was a clearing, and then at intervals an enormous pine umbrella, and then we suddenly came to the edge of the forest, some hundred meters below the pass leading to the wild valley of Niolo.

On the two projecting heights which commanded a view of this pass, some old trees, grotesquely twisted, seemed to have mounted with painful efforts, like scouts sent in advance of the multitude in the rear. When we turned round, we saw the entire forest stretched beneath our feet, like a gigantic basin of verdure, inclosed by bare rocks whose summits seemed to reach the sky.

We resumed our walk, and, ten minutes later, found ourselves in the pass.

Then I beheld a remarkable landscape. Beyond another forest stretched a valley, but a valley such as I had never seen before; a solitude of stone, ten leagues long, hollowed out between two high mountains, without a field or a tree to be seen. This was the Niolo valley, the fatherland of Corsican liberty,

THE CORSICAN BANDIT

the inaccessible citadel, from which the invaders had never been able to drive out the mountaineers.

My companion said to me: "This is where all our bandits have taken refuge?"

Ere long we were at the further end of this gorge, so wild, so inconceivably beautiful.

Not a blade of grass, not a plant—nothing but granite. As far as our eyes could reach, we saw in front of us a desert of glittering stone, heated like an oven by a burning sun, which seemed to hang for that very purpose right above the gorge. When we raised our eyes towards the crests, we stood dazzled and stupefied by what we saw. They looked like a festoon of coral; all the summits are of porphyry; and the sky overhead was violet, purple, tinged with the coloring of these strange mountains. Lower down, the granite was of scintillating gray, and seemed ground to powder beneath our feet. At our right, along a long and irregular course, roared a tumultuous torrent. And we staggered along under this heat, in this light, in this burning, arid, desolate valley cut by this torrent of turbulent water which seemed to be ever hurrying onward, without fertilizing the rocks, lost in this furnace which greedily drank it up without being saturated or refreshed by it.

But, suddenly, there was visible at our right a little wooden cross sunk in a little heap of stones. A man had been killed there; and I said to my companion:

"Tell me about your bandits."

He replied:

"I knew the most celebrated of them, the terrible St. Lucia. I will tell you his history.

THE CORSICAN BANDIT

"His father was killed in a quarrel by a young man of the district, it is said; and St. Lucia was left alone with his sister. He was a weak, timid youth, small, often ill, without any energy. He did not proclaim vengeance against the assassin of his father. All his relatives came to see him, and implored of him to avenge his death; he remained deaf to their menaces and their supplications.

"Then, following the old Corsican custom, his sister, in her indignation carried away his black clothes, in order that he might not wear mourning for a dead man who had not been avenged. He was insensible to even this affront, and rather than take down from the rack his father's gun, which was still loaded, he shut himself up, not daring to brave the looks of the young men of the district.

"He seemed to have even forgotten the crime, and lived with his sister in the seclusion of their dwelling.

But, one day, the man who was suspected of having committed the murder, was about to get married. St. Lucia did not appear to be moved by this news, but, out of sheer bravado, doubtless, the bridegroom, on his way to the church, passed before the house of the two orphans.

"The brother and the sister, at their window, were eating frijoles, when the young man saw the bridal procession going by. Suddenly he began to tremble, rose to his feet without uttering a word, made the sign of the cross, took the gun which was hanging over the fireplace, and went out.

"When he spoke of this later on, he said: 'I don't know what was the matter with me; it was like fire in my blood; I felt that I must do it, that, in spite

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of everything, I could not resist, and I concealed the gun in a cave on the road to Corte.'

"An hour later, he came back, with nothing in his hand, and with his habitual air of sad weariness. His sister believed that there was nothing further in his thoughts.

But when night fell he disappeared.

"His enemy had, the same evening, to repair to Corte on foot, accompanied by his two groomsmen.

"He was walking along, singing as he went, when St. Lucia stood before him, and looking straight in the murderer's face, exclaimed: 'Now is the time!' and shot him point-blank in the chest.

"One of the men fled; the other stared at the young man, saying:

"'What have you done, St. Lucia?' and he was about to hasten to Corte for help, when St. Lucia said in a stern tone:

"'If you move another step, I'll shoot you in the leg.'

"The other, aware of his timidity hitherto, replied: 'You would not dare to do it!' and was hurrying off when he fell instantaneously, his thigh shattered by a bullet.

"And St. Lucia, coming over to where he lay, said:

"'I am going to look at your wound; if it is not serious, I'll leave you there; if it is mortal I'll finish you off.'

"He inspected the wound, considered it mortal, and slowly reloading his gun, told the wounded man to say a prayer, and shot him through the head.

"Next day he was in the mountains.

THE CORSICAN BANDIT

"And do you know what this St. Lucia did after this?

"All his family were arrested by the gendarmes. His uncle, the curé, who was suspected of having incited him to this deed of vengeance, was himself put in prison, and accused by the dead man's relatives. But he escaped, took a gun in his turn, and went to join his nephew in the brush.

"Next, St. Lucia killed, one after the other, his uncle's accusers, and tore out their eyes to teach the others never to state what they had seen with their eyes.

"He killed all the relatives, all the connections of his enemy's family. He slew during his life fourteen gendarmes, burned down the houses of his adversaries, and was, up to the day of his death, the most terrible of all the bandits whose memory we have preserved."

* * * * *

The sun disappeared behind Monte Cinto and the tall shadow of the granite mountain went to sleep on the granite of the valley. We quickened our pace in order to reach before night the little village of Albertaccio, nothing but a pile of stones welded into the stone flanks of a wild gorge. And I said as I thought of the bandit:

"What a terrible custom your vendetta is!"

My companion answered with an air of resignation:

"What would you have? A man must do his duty!"

A WIDOW

THIS story was told during the hunting season at the Château Baneville. The autumn had been rainy and sad. The red leaves, instead of rustling under the feet, were rotting under the heavy downfalls.

The forest was as damp as it could be. From it came an odor of must, of rain, of soaked grass and wet earth; and the sportsmen, their backs hunched under the downpour, mournful dogs, with tails between their legs and hairs sticking to their sides, and the young women, with their clothes drenched, returned every evening, tired in body and in mind.

After dinner, in the large drawing-room, everybody played lotto, without enjoyment, while the wind whistled madly around the house. Then they tried telling stories like those they read in books, but no one was able to invent anything amusing. The hunters told tales of wonderful shots and of the butchery of rabbits; and the women racked their brains for ideas without revealing the imagination of Scheherezade. They were about to give up this diversion when a young woman, who was idly caressing the hand of an old maiden aunt, noticed a little ring made of blond hair, which she had often seen without paying any attention to it.

She fingered it gently and asked, "Auntie, what

A WIDOW

is this ring? It looks as if it were made from the hair of a child."

The old lady blushed, grew pale, then answered in a trembling voice: "It is sad, so sad that I never wish to speak of it. All the unhappiness of my life comes from that. I was very young then, and the memory has remained so painful that I weep every time I think of it."

Immediately everybody wished to know the story, but the old lady refused to tell it. Finally, after they had coaxed her for a long time, she yielded. Here is the story:

"You have often heard me speak of the Santèze family, now extinct. I knew the last three male members of this family. They all died in the same manner; this hair belongs to the last one. He was thirteen when he killed himself for me. That seems strange to you, doesn't it?

"Oh! it was a strange family—mad, if you will, but a charming madness, the madness of love. From father to son, all had violent passions which filled their whole being, which impelled them to do wild things, drove them to frantic enthusiasm, even to crime. This was born in them, just as burning devotion is in certain souls. Trappers have not the same nature as minions of the drawing-room. There was a saying: 'As passionate as a Santèze.' This could be noticed by looking at them. They all had wavy hair, falling over their brows, curly beards and large eyes whose glance pierced and moved one, though one could not say why.

"The grandfather of the owner of this hair, of whom it is the last souvenir, after many adventures, duels and elopements, at about sixty-five fell madly

A WIDOW

in love with his farmer's daughter. I knew them both. She was blond, pale, distinguished-looking, with a slow manner of talking, a quiet voice and a look so gentle that one might have taken her for a Madonna. The old nobleman took her to his home and was soon so captivated with her that he could not live without her for a minute. His daughter and daughter-in-law, who lived in the château, found this perfectly natural, love was such a tradition in the family. Nothing in regard to a passion surprised them, and if one spoke before them of parted lovers, even of vengeance after treachery, both said in the same sad tone: 'Oh, how he must have suffered to come to that point!' That was all. They grew sad over tragedies of love, but never indignant, even when they were criminal.

"Now, one day a young man named Monsieur de Gradelle, who had been invited for the shooting, eloped with the young girl.

"Monsieur de Santèze remained calm as if nothing had happened, but one morning he was found hanging in the kennels, among his dogs.

"His son died in the same manner in a hotel in Paris during a journey which he made there in 1841, after being deceived by a singer from the opera.

"He left a twelve-year-old child and a widow, my mother's sister. She came to my father's house with the boy, while we were living at Bertillon. I was then seventeen.

"You have no idea how wonderful and precocious this Santèze child was. One might have thought that all the tenderness and exaltation of the whole race had been stored up in this last one. He was always dreaming and walking about alone in a great alley

A WIDOW

of elms leading from the château to the forest. I watched from my window this sentimental boy, who walked with thoughtful steps, his hands behind his back, his head bent, and at times stopping to raise his eyes as if he could see and understand things that were not comprehensible at his age.

"Often, after dinner on clear evenings, he would say to me: 'Let us go outside and dream, cousin.' And we would go outside together in the park. He would stop quickly before a clearing where the white vapor of the moon lights the woods, and he would press my hand, saying: 'Look! look! but you don't understand me; I feel it. If you understood me, we should be happy. One must love to know!' I would laugh and then kiss this child, who loved me madly.

"Often, after dinner, he would sit on my mother's knees. 'Come, auntie,' he would say, 'tell me some love-stories.' And my mother, as a joke, would tell him all the old legends of the family, all the passionate adventures of his forefathers, for thousands of them were current, some true and some false. It was their reputation for love and gallantry which was the ruin of every one of these men; they gloried in it and then thought that they had to live up to the renown of their house.

"The little fellow became exalted by these tender or terrible stories, and at times he would clap his hands, crying: 'I, too, I, too, know how to love, better than all of them!'

"Then he began to court me in a timid and tender manner, at which every one laughed, it was so amusing. Every morning I had some flowers picked by him, and every evening before going to his room he would kiss my hand and murmur: 'I love you!'

A WIDOW

"I was guilty, very guilty, and I grieved continually about it, and I have been doing penance all my life; I have remained an old maid—or, rather, I have lived as a widowed *fiancée*, his widow.

"I was amused at this childish tenderness, and I even encouraged him. I was coquettish, as charming as with a man, alternately caressing and severe. I maddened this child. It was a game for me and a joyous diversion for his mother and mine. He was twelve! think of it! Who would have taken this atom's passion seriously? I kissed him as often as he wished; I even wrote him little notes, which were read by our respective mothers; and he answered me by passionate letters, which I have kept. Judging himself as a man, he thought that our loving intimacy was secret. We had forgotten that he was a Santèze.

"This lasted for about a year. One evening in the park he fell at my feet and, as he madly kissed the hem of my dress, he kept repeating: 'I love you! I love you! I love you! If ever you deceive me, if ever you leave me for another, I'll do as my father did.' And he added in a hoarse voice, which gave me a shiver: 'You know what he did!'

"I stood there astonished. He arose, and standing on the tips of his toes in order to reach my ear, for I was taller than he, he pronounced my first name: 'Genevieve!' in such a gentle, sweet, tender tone that I trembled all over. I stammered: 'Let us return! let us return!' He said no more and followed me; but as we were going up the steps of the porch, he stopped me, saying: 'You know, if ever you leave me, I'll kill myself.'

"This time I understood that I had gone too far,

A WIDOW

and I became quite reserved. One day, as he was reproaching me for this, I answered: 'You are now too old for jesting and too young for serious love. I'll wait.'

"I thought that this would end the matter. In the autumn he was sent to a boarding-school. When he returned the following summer I was engaged to be married. He understood immediately, and for a week he became so pensive that I was quite anxious.

"On the morning of the ninth day I saw a little paper under my door as I got up. I seized it, opened it and read: 'You have deserted me and you know what I said. It is death to which you have condemned me. As I do not wish to be found by another than you, come to the park just where I told you last year that I loved you and look in the air.'

"I thought that I should go mad. I dressed as quickly as I could and ran wildly to the place that he had mentioned. His little cap was on the ground in the mud. It had been raining all night. I raised my eyes and saw something swinging among the leaves, for the wind was blowing a gale.

"I don't know what I did after that. I must have screamed at first, then fainted and fallen, and finally have run to the château. The next thing that I remember I was in bed, with my mother sitting beside me.

"I thought that I had dreamed all this in a frightful nightmare. I stammered: 'And what of him, what of him, Gontran?' There was no answer. It was true!

"I did not dare see him again, but I asked for a lock of his blond hair. Here—here it is!"

And the old maid stretched out her trembling

A WIDOW

hand in a despairing gesture. Then she blew her nose several times, wiped her eyes and continued: "I broke off my marriage—without saying why. And I—I always have remained the—the widow of this thirteen-year-old boy." Then her head fell on her breast and she wept for a long time.

As the guests were retiring for the night a large man, whose quiet she had disturbed, whispered in his neighbor's ear: "Isn't it unfortunate to be so sentimental?"

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

“**T**HERE, my friend,” I said to Labarbe, “you have just repeated those five words, *that pig of a Morin*. Why on earth do I never hear Morin’s name mentioned without his being called *a pig*?”

Labarbe, who is a deputy, looked at me with his owl-like eyes and said: “Do you mean to say that you do not know Morin’s story and you come from La Rochelle?” I was obliged to declare that I did not know Morin’s story, so Labarbe rubbed his hands and began his recital.

“You knew Morin, did you not, and you remember his large linen-draper’s shop on the Quai de la Rochelle?” “Yes, perfectly.”

“Well, then. You must know that in 1862 or ’63 Morin went to spend a fortnight in Paris for pleasure, or for his pleasures, but under the pretext of renewing his stock, and you also know what a fortnight in Paris means to a country shopkeeper; it fires his blood. The theatre every evening, women’s dresses rustling up against you and continual excitement; one goes almost mad with it. One sees nothing but dancers in tights, actresses in very low dresses, round legs, fat shoulders, all nearly within reach of one’s hands, without daring, or being able, to touch them, and one scarcely tastes food. When one leaves the city one’s heart is still all in a flutter

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

and one's mind still exhilarated by a sort of longing for kisses which tickles one's lips.

"Morin was in that condition when he took his ticket for La Rochelle by the eight-forty night express. As he was walking up and down the waiting-room at the station he stopped suddenly in front of a young lady who was kissing an old one. She had her veil up, and Morin murmured with delight: 'By Jove, what a pretty woman!'

"When she had said 'good-by' to the old lady she went into the waiting-room, and Morin followed her; then she went on the platform and Morin still followed her; then she got into an empty carriage, and he again followed her. There were very few travellers on the express. The engine whistled and the train started. They were alone. Morin devoured her with his eyes. She appeared to be about nineteen or twenty and was fair, tall, with a bold look. She wrapped a railway rug round her and stretched herself on the seat to sleep.

"Morin asked himself: 'I wonder who she is?' And a thousand conjectures, a thousand projects went through his head. He said to himself: 'So many adventures are told as happening on railway journeys that this may be one that is going to present itself to me. Who knows? A piece of good luck like that happens very suddenly, and perhaps I need only be a little venturesome. Was it not Danton who said: "Audacity, more audacity and always audacity"? If it was not Danton it was Mirabeau, but that does not matter. But then I have no audacity, and that is the difficulty. Oh! If one only knew, if one could only read people's minds! I will bet that every day one passes by magnificent oppor-

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

tunities without knowing it, though a gesture would be enough to let me know her mind.'

"Then he imagined to himself combinations which conducted him to triumph. He pictured some chivalrous deed or merely some slight service which he rendered her, a lively, gallant conversation which ended in a declaration.

"But he could find no opening, had no pretext, and he waited for some fortunate circumstance, with his heart beating and his mind topsy-turvy. The night passed and the pretty girl still slept, while Morin was meditating his own fall. The day broke and soon the first ray of sunlight appeared in the sky, a long, clear ray which shone on the face of the sleeping girl and woke her. She sat up, looked at the country, then at Morin and smiled. She smiled like a happy woman, with an engaging and bright look, and Morin trembled. Certainly that smile was intended for him; it was discreet invitation, the signal which he was waiting for. That smile meant to say: 'How stupid, what a ninny, what a dolt, what a donkey you are, to have sat there on your seat like a post all night!

"'Just look at me, am I not charming? And you have sat like that for the whole night, when you have been alone with a pretty woman, you great simpleton!'

"She was still smiling as she looked at him; she even began to laugh; and he lost his head trying to find something suitable to say, no matter what. But he could think of nothing, nothing, and then, seized with a coward's courage, he said to himself: 'So much the worse, I will risk everything,' and suddenly, without the slightest warning, he went to-

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

ward her, his arms extended, his lips protruding, and, seizing her in his arms, he kissed her.

"She sprang up immediately with a bound, crying out: 'Help! help!' and screaming with terror, and then she opened the carriage door and waved her arm out, mad with terror and trying to jump out, while Morin, who was almost distracted and feeling sure that she would throw herself out, held her by the skirt and stammered: 'Oh, madame! oh, madame!'

"The train slackened speed and then stopped. Two guards rushed up at the young woman's frantic signals. She threw herself into their arms, stammering: 'That man wanted—wanted—to—to——' And then she fainted.

"They were at Mauzé station, and the gendarme on duty arrested Morin. When the victim of his indiscreet admiration had regained her consciousness, she made her charge against him, and the police drew it up. The poor linen draper did not reach home till night, with a prosecution hanging over him for an outrage to morals in a public place.

II

"At that time I was editor of the *Fanal des Charentes*, and I used to meet Morin every day at the Café du Commerce, and the day after his adventure he came to see me, as he did not know what to do. I did not hide my opinion from him, but said to him: 'You are no better than a pig. No decent man behaves like that.'

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

"He cried. His wife had given him a beating, and he foresaw his trade ruined, his name dragged through the mire and dishonored, his friends scandalized and taking no notice of him. In the end he excited my pity, and I sent for my colleague, Rivet, a jocular but very sensible little man, to give us his advice.

"He advised me to see the public prosecutor, who was a friend of mine, and so I sent Morin home and went to call on the magistrate. He told me that the woman who had been insulted was a young lady, Mademoiselle Henriette Bonnel, who had just received her certificate as governess in Paris and spent her holidays with her uncle and aunt, who were very respectable tradespeople in Mauzé. What made Morin's case all the more serious was that the uncle had lodged a complaint, but the public official had consented to let the matter drop if this complaint were withdrawn, so we must try and get him to do this.

"I went back to Morin's and found him in bed, ill with excitement and distress. His wife, a tall raw-boned woman with a beard, was abusing him continually, and she showed me into the room, shouting at me: 'So you have come to see that pig of a Morin. Well, there he is, the darling!' And she planted herself in front of the bed, with her hands on her hips. I told him how matters stood, and he begged me to go and see the girl's uncle and aunt. It was a delicate mission, but I undertook it, and the poor devil never ceased repeating: 'I assure you I did not even kiss her; no, not even that. I will take my oath to it!'

"I replied: 'It is all the same; you are nothing



"As they entered the white gateway of the husband's farm, forty shots resounded.

—A Normandy Joke, p. 1.

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

but a pig.' And I took a thousand francs which he gave me to employ as I thought best, but as I did not care to venture to her uncle's house alone, I begged Rivet to go with me, which he agreed to do on condition that we went immediately, for he had some urgent business at La Rochelle that afternoon. So two hours later we rang at the door of a pretty country house. An attractive girl came and opened the door to us, assuredly the young lady in question, and I said to Rivet in a low voice: 'Confound it! I begin to understand Morin!'

"The uncle, Monsieur Tonnelet, subscribed to the *Fanal*, and was a fervent political coreligionist of ours. He received us with open arms and congratulated us and wished us joy; he was delighted at having the two editors in his house, and Rivet whispered to me: 'I think we shall be able to arrange the matter of that pig of a Morin for him.'

"The niece had left the room and I introduced the delicate subject. I waved the spectre of scandal before his eyes; I accentuated the inevitable depreciation which the young lady would suffer if such an affair became known, for nobody would believe in a simple kiss, and the good man seemed undecided, but he could not make up his mind about anything without his wife, who would not be in until late that evening. But suddenly he uttered an exclamation of triumph: 'Look here, I have an excellent idea; I will keep you here to dine and sleep, and when my wife comes home I hope we shall be able to arrange matters.'

"Rivet resisted at first, but the wish to extricate that pig of a Morin decided him, and we accepted the invitation, and the uncle got up radiant, called

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his niece and proposed that we should take a stroll in his grounds, saying: 'We will leave serious matters until the morning.' Rivet and he began to talk politics, while I soon found myself lagging a little behind with the girl who was really charming—charming—and with the greatest precaution I began to speak to her about her adventure and try to make her my ally. She did not, however, appear the least confused, and listened to me like a person who was enjoying the whole thing very much.

"I said to her: 'Just think, mademoiselle, how unpleasant it will be for you. You will have to appear in court, to encounter malicious looks, to speak before everybody and to recount that unfortunate occurrence in the railway carriage in public. Do you not think, between ourselves, that it would have been much better for you to have put that dirty scoundrel back in his place without calling for assistance, and merely to change your carriage?' She began to laugh and replied: 'What you say is quite true, but what could I do? I was frightened, and when one is frightened one does not stop to reason with one's self. As soon as I realized the situation I was very sorry that I had called out, but then it was too late. You must also remember that the idiot threw himself upon me like a madman, without saying a word and looking like a lunatic. I did not even know what he wanted of me.'

"She looked me full in the face without being nervous or intimidated, and I said to myself: 'She is a queer sort of girl, that: I can quite see how that pig Morin came to make a mistake,' and I went on jokingly: 'Come, mademoiselle, confess that he was excusable, for, after all, a man cannot find himself

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opposite such a pretty girl as you are without feeling a natural desire to kiss her.'

"She laughed more than ever and showed her teeth and said: 'Between the desire and the act, monsieur, there is room for respect.' It was an odd expression to use, although it was not very clear, and I asked abruptly: 'Well, now, suppose I were to kiss you, what would you do?' She stopped to look at me from head to foot and then said calmly: 'Oh, you? That is quite another matter.'

"I knew perfectly well, by Jove, that it was not the same thing at all, as everybody in the neighborhood called me 'Handsome Labarbe'—I was thirty years old in those days—but I asked her: 'And why, pray?' She shrugged her shoulders and replied: 'Well! because you are not so stupid as he is.' And then she added, looking at me slyly: 'Nor so ugly, either.' And before she could make a movement to avoid me I had implanted a hearty kiss on her cheek. She sprang aside, but it was too late, and then she said: 'Well, you are not very bashful, either! But don't do that sort of thing again.'

"I put on a humble look and said in a low voice: 'Oh, mademoiselle! as for me, if I long for one thing more than another it is to be summoned before a magistrate for the same reason as Morin.'

"'Why?' she asked. And, looking steadily at her, I replied: 'Because you are one of the most beautiful creatures living; because it would be an honor and a glory for me to have wished to offer you violence, and because people would have said, after seeing you: "Well, Labarbe has richly deserved what he has got, but he is a lucky fellow, all the same."'

"She began to laugh heartily again and said: 'How

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funny you are!’ And she had not finished the word ‘funny’ before I had her in my arms and was kissing her ardently wherever I could find a place, on her forehead, on her eyes, on her lips occasionally, on her cheeks, all over her head, some part of which she was obliged to leave exposed, in spite of herself, to defend the others; but at last she managed to release herself, blushing and angry. ‘You are very unmannerly, monsieur,’ she said, ‘and I am sorry I listened to you.’

“I took her hand in some confusion and stammered out: ‘I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon, mademoiselle. I have offended you; I have acted like a brute! Do not be angry with me for what I have done. If you knew——’ I vainly sought for some excuse, and in a few moments she said: ‘There is nothing for me to know, monsieur.’ But I had found something to say, and I cried: ‘Mademoiselle, I love you!’

“She was really surprised and raised her eyes to look at me, and I went on: ‘Yes, mademoiselle, and pray listen to me. I do not know Morin, and I do not care anything about him. It does not matter to me the least if he is committed for trial and locked up meanwhile. I saw you here last year, and I was so taken with you that the thought of you has never left me since, and it does not matter to me whether you believe me or not. I thought you adorable, and the remembrance of you took such a hold on me that I longed to see you again, and so I made use of that fool Morin as a pretext, and here I am. Circumstances have made me exceed the due limits of respect, and I can only beg you to pardon me.’

“She looked at me to see if I was in earnest and

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was ready to smile again. Then she murmured: 'You humbug!' But I raised my hand and said in a sincere voice (and I really believe that I was sincere): 'I swear to you that I am speaking the truth,' and she replied quite simply: 'Don't talk nonsense!'

"We were alone, quite alone, as Rivet and her uncle had disappeared down a sidewalk, and I made her a real declaration of love, while I squeezed and kissed her hands, and she listened to it as to something new and agreeable, without exactly knowing how much of it she was to believe, while in the end I felt agitated, and at last really myself believed what I said. I was pale, anxious and trembling, and I gently put my arm round her waist and spoke to her softly, whispering into the little curls over her ears. She seemed in a trance, so absorbed in thought was she.

"Then her hand touched mine, and she pressed it, and I gently squeezed her waist with a trembling, and gradually firmer, grasp. She did not move now, and I touched her cheek with my lips, and suddenly without seeking them my lips met hers. It was a long, long kiss, and it would have lasted longer still if I had not heard a *hm! hm!* just behind me, at which she made her escape through the bushes, and turning round I saw Rivet coming toward me, and, standing in the middle of the path, he said without even smiling: 'So that is the way you settle the affair of that pig of a Morin.' And I replied conceitedly: 'One does what one can, my dear fellow. But what about the uncle? How have you got on with him? I will answer for the niece.' 'I have not been so fortunate with him,' he replied.

"Whereupon I took his arm and we went indoors.

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III

"Dinner made me lose my head altogether. I sat beside her, and my hand continually met hers under the tablecloth, my foot touched hers and our glances met.

"After dinner we took a walk by moonlight, and I whispered all the tender things I could think of to her. I held her close to me, kissed her every moment, while her uncle and Rivet were arguing as they walked in front of us. They went in, and soon a messenger brought a telegram from her aunt, saying that she would not return until the next morning at seven o'clock by the first train.

"'Very well, Henriette,' her uncle said, 'go and show the gentlemen their rooms.' She showed Rivet his first, and he whispered to me: 'There was no danger of her taking us into yours first.' Then she took me to my room, and as soon as she was alone with me I took her in my arms again and tried to arouse her emotion, but when she saw the danger she escaped out of the room, and I retired, very much put out and excited and feeling rather foolish, for I knew that I should not sleep much, and I was wondering how I could have committed such a mistake, when there was a gentle knock at my door, and on my asking who was there a low voice replied: 'I.'

"I dressed myself quickly and opened the door, and she came in. 'I forgot to ask you what you take in the morning,' she said; 'chocolate, tea or coffee?' I put my arms round her impetuously and said, devouring her with kisses: 'I will take—I will take——'

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"But she freed herself from my arms, blew out my candle and disappeared and left me alone in the dark, furious, trying to find some matches, and not able to do so. At last I got some and I went into the passage, feeling half mad, with my candlestick in my hand.

"What was I about to do? I did not stop to reason, I only wanted to find her, and I would. I went a few steps without reflecting, but then I suddenly thought: 'Suppose I should walk into the uncle's room, what should I say?' And I stood still, with my head a void and my heart beating. But in a few moments I thought of an answer: 'Of course, I shall say that I was looking for Rivet's room to speak to him about an important matter,' and I began to inspect all the doors, trying to find hers, and at last I took hold of a handle at a venture, turned it and went in. There was Henriette, sitting on her bed and looking at me in tears. So I gently stepped in, and going up to her on tiptoe, I said: 'I forgot to ask you for something to read, mademoiselle.'

"I was stealthily returning to my room when a rough hand seized me and a voice—it was Rivet's—whispered in my ear: 'So you have not yet quite settled that affair of Morin's?'

"At seven o'clock the next morning Henriette herself brought me a cup of chocolate. I never have drunk anything like it, soft, velvety, perfumed, delicious. I could hardly take away my lips from the cup, and she had hardly left the room when Rivet came in. He seemed nervous and irritable, like a man who had not slept, and he said to me crossly:

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'If you go on like this you will end by spoiling the affair of that pig of a Morin!'

"At eight o'clock the aunt arrived. Our discussion was very short, for they withdrew their complaint, and I left five hundred francs for the poor of the town. They wanted to keep us for the day, and they arranged an excursion to go and see some ruins. Henriette made signs to me to stay, behind her parents' back, and I accepted, but Rivet was determined to go, and though I took him aside and begged and prayed him to do this for me, he appeared quite exasperated and kept saying to me: 'I have had enough of that pig of a Morin's affair, do you hear?'

"Of course I was obliged to leave also, and it was one of the hardest moments of my life. I could have gone on arranging that business as long as I lived, and when we were in the railway carriage, after shaking hands with her in silence, I said to Rivet: 'You are a mere brute!' And he replied: 'My dear fellow, you were beginning to annoy me confoundedly.'

"On getting to the *Fanal* office, I saw a crowd waiting for us, and as soon as they saw us they all exclaimed: 'Well, have you settled the affair of that pig of a Morin?' All La Rochelle was excited about it, and Rivet, who had got over his ill-humor on the journey, had great difficulty in keeping himself from laughing as he said: 'Yes, we have managed it, thanks to Labarbe.' And we went to Morin's.

"He was sitting in an easy-chair with mustard plasters on his legs and cold bandages on his head, nearly dead with misery. He was coughing with the short cough of a dying man, without any one know-

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ing how he had caught it, and his wife looked at him like a tigress ready to eat him, and as soon as he saw us he trembled so violently as to make his hands and knees shake, so I said to him immediately: 'It is all settled, you dirty scamp, but don't do such a thing again.'

"He got up, choking, took my hands and kissed them as if they had belonged to a prince, cried, nearly fainted, embraced Rivet and even kissed Madame Morin, who gave him such a push as to send him staggering back into his chair; but he never got over the blow; his mind had been too much upset. In all the country round, moreover, he was called nothing but 'that pig of a Morin,' and that epithet went through him like a sword-thrust every time he heard it. When a street boy called after him 'Pig!' he turned his head instinctively. His friends also overwhelmed him with horrible jokes and used to ask him, whenever they were eating ham, 'Is it a bit of yourself?' He died two years later.

"As for myself, when I was a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies in 1875, I called on the new notary at Fousserre, Monsieur Belloncle, to solicit his vote, and a tall, handsome and evidently wealthy lady received me. 'You do not know me again?' she said. And I stammered out: 'Why—no—madame.' 'Henriette Bonnel.' 'Ah!' And I felt myself turning pale, while she seemed perfectly at her ease and looked at me with a smile.

"As soon as she had left me alone with her husband he took both my hands, and, squeezing them as if he meant to crush them, he said: 'I have been intending to go and see you for a long time, my dear sir, for my wife has very often talked to me

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about you. I know—yes, I know under what painful circumstances you made her acquaintance, and I know also how perfectly you behaved, how full of delicacy, tact and devotion you showed yourself in the affair——’ He hesitated and then said in a lower tone, as if he had been saying something low and coarse, ‘in the affair of that pig of a Morin.’”

A NORMANDY JOKE

IT was a wedding procession that was coming along the road between the tall trees that bounded the farms and cast their shadow on the road. At the head were the bride and groom, then the family, then the invited guests, and last of all the poor of the neighborhood. The village urchins who hovered about the narrow road like flies ran in and out of the ranks or climbed up the trees to see it better.

The bridegroom was a good-looking young fellow, Jean Patu, the richest farmer in the neighborhood, but he was, above all things, an ardent sportsman who seemed to take leave of his senses in order to satisfy that passion, and who spent large sums on his dogs, his keepers, his ferrets and his guns. The bride, Rosalie Roussel, had been courted by all the likely young fellows in the district, for they all thought her handsome and they knew that she would have a good dowry. But she had chosen Patu; partly, perhaps, because she liked him better than she did the others, but still more, like a careful Normandy girl, because he had more crown pieces.

As they entered the white gateway of the husband's farm, forty shots resounded without their seeing those who fired, as they were hidden in the ditches. The noise seemed to please the men, who were slouching along heavily in their best clothes,

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and Patu left his wife, and running up to a farm servant whom he perceived behind a tree, took his gun and fired a shot himself, as frisky as a young colt. Then they went on, beneath the apple trees which were heavy with fruit, through the high grass and through the midst of the calves, who looked at them with their great eyes, got up slowly and remained standing, with their muzzles turned toward the wedding party.

The men became serious when they came within measurable distance of the wedding dinner. Some of them, the rich ones, had on tall, shining silk hats, which seemed altogether out of place there; others had old head-coverings with a long nap, which might have been taken for moleskin, while the humblest among them wore caps. All the women had on shawls, which they wore loosely on their back, holding the tips ceremoniously under their arms. They were red, parti-colored, flaming shawls, and their brightness seemed to astonish the black fowls on the dung-heap, the ducks on the side of the pond and the pigeons on the thatched roofs.

The extensive farm buildings seemed to be waiting there at the end of that archway of apple trees, and a sort of vapor came out of open door and windows and an almost overpowering odor of eatables was exhaled from the vast building, from all its openings and from its very walls. The string of guests extended through the yard; but when the foremost of them reached the house, they broke the chain and dispersed, while those behind were still coming in at the open gate. The ditches were now lined with urchins and curious poor people, and the firing did not cease, but came from every side at

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once, and a cloud of smoke, and that odor which has the same intoxicating effect as absinthe, blended with the atmosphere.

The women were shaking their dresses outside the door, to get rid of the dust, were undoing their cap-strings and pulling their shawls over their arms, and then they went into the house to lay them aside altogether for the time. The table was laid in the great kitchen that would hold a hundred persons; they sat down to dinner at two o'clock, and at eight o'clock they were still eating, and the men, in their shirt-sleeves, with their waistcoats unbuttoned and with red faces, were swallowing down the food and drink as if they had been whirlpools. The cider sparkled merrily, clear and golden in the large glasses, by the side of the dark, blood-colored wine, and between every dish they made a "hole," the Normandy hole, with a glass of brandy which inflamed the body and put foolish notions into the head. Low jokes were exchanged across the table until the whole arsenal of peasant wit was exhausted. For the last hundred years the same broad stories had served for similar occasions, and, although every one knew them, they still hit the mark and made both rows of guests roar with laughter.

At one end of the table four young fellows, who were neighbors, were preparing some practical jokes for the newly married couple, and they seemed to have got hold of a good one by the way they whispered and laughed, and suddenly one of them, profiting by a moment of silence, exclaimed: "The poachers will have a good time to-night, with this moon! I say, Jean, you will not be looking at the moon, will you?" The bridegroom turned to him

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quickly and replied: "Only let them come, that's all!" But the other young fellow began to laugh, and said: "I do not think you will pay much attention to them!"

The whole table was convulsed with laughter, so that the glasses shook, but the bridegroom became furious at the thought that anybody would profit by his wedding to come and poach on his land, and repeated: "I only say—just let them come!"

Then there was a flood of talk with a double meaning which made the bride blush somewhat, although she was trembling with expectation; and when they had emptied the kegs of brandy they all went to bed. The young couple went into their own room, which was on the ground floor, as most rooms in farmhouses are. As it was very warm, they opened the window and closed the shutters. A small lamp in bad taste, a present from the bride's father, was burning on the chest of drawers, and the bed stood ready to receive the young people.

The young woman had already taken off her wreath and her dress, and she was in her petticoat, unlacing her boots, while Jean was finishing his cigar and looking at her out of the corners of his eyes. Suddenly, with a brusque movement, like a man who is about to set to work, he took off his coat. She had already taken off her boots, and was now pulling off her stockings, and then she said to him: "Go and hide yourself behind the curtains while I get into bed."

He seemed as if he were about to refuse; but at last he did as she asked him, and in a moment she unfastened her petticoat, which slipped down, fell at her feet and lay on the ground. She left it

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there, stepped over it in her loose chemise and slipped into the bed, whose springs creaked beneath her weight. He immediately went up to the bed, and, stooping over his wife, he sought her lips, which she hid beneath the pillow, when a shot was heard in the distance, in the direction of the forest of Râpées, as he thought.

He raised himself anxiously, with his heart beating, and running to the window, he opened the shutters. The full moon flooded the yard with yellow light, and the reflection of the apple trees made black shadows at their feet, while in the distance the fields gleamed, covered with the ripe corn. But as he was leaning out, listening to every sound in the still night, two bare arms were put round his neck, and his wife whispered, trying to pull him back: "Do leave them alone; it has nothing to do with you. Come to bed."

He turned round, put his arms round her, and drew her toward him, but just as he was laying her on the bed, which yielded beneath her weight, they heard another report, considerably nearer this time, and Jean, giving way to his tumultuous rage, swore aloud: "Hang it! They will think I do not go out and see what it is because of you! Wait, wait a few minutes!" He put on his shoes again, took down his gun, which was always hanging within reach against the wall, and, as his wife threw herself on her knees in her terror, imploring him not to go, he hastily freed himself, ran to the window and jumped into the yard.

She waited one hour, two hours, until daybreak, but her husband did not return. Then she lost her head, aroused the house, related how angry Jean

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was, and said that he had gone after the poachers, and immediately all the male farm-servants, even the boys, went in search of their master. They found him two leagues from the farm, tied hand and foot, half dead with rage, his gun broken, his trousers turned inside out, and with three dead hares hanging round his neck, and a placard on his chest with these words: "Who goes on the chase loses his place."

In later years, when he used to tell this story of his wedding night, he usually added: "Ah! as far as a joke went it was a good joke. They caught me in a snare, as if I had been a rabbit, the dirty brutes, and they shoved my head into a bag. But if I can only catch them some day they had better look out for themselves!"

That is how they amuse themselves in Normandy on a wedding day.

ON THE JOURNEY

ON leaving Cannes the carriage was full, and as all were acquainted, we entered into conversation. As we passed Tarascon some one said: "It is here the murders happen." And we began to talk of that mysterious assassin who has never been caught, and who from time to time during the last two years has undertaken to kill some traveller. Every one hazarded suppositions, every one gave his opinion. The women trembled as they looked through the windows at the dark night, fearing to see the head of a man show suddenly at the door of the carriage. We began to tell gruesome stories of terrible adventures of some *tête-à-tête* with a madman in an express, of hours passed opposite suspicious-looking persons, quite alone.

All the men had intimidated, knocked down and choked some malefactor under remarkable circumstances, with admirable boldness and presence of mind. A physician, who passed each winter in the South, wished in his turn to tell a tale.

"I," said he, "never have had the chance to try my courage in an affair of that sort, but I knew a woman, one of my patients who is now dead, to whom there happened the strangest thing in the world and also the most weird and the most affecting.

"She was a Russian, the Comtesse Marie Bara-

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now, a very great lady of exquisite beauty. We all know how beautiful the Russian women are, or at least how beautiful they seem to us, with their thin nostrils, their delicate mouths, their close-set eyes of an indefinite shade—a sort of blue-gray—and with that grace of theirs which is cold and a little hard. They have about them something naughty and seductive, something haughty and gentle, something tender and severe, which is very alluring to a Frenchman. It is perhaps, however, only the difference of race and type which makes me see so much.

“For several years her doctor had noticed that she was threatened with lung trouble and had been trying to induce her to go to the south of France, but she obstinately refused to leave St. Petersburg. Finally, last autumn, the physician gave her up as lost, and so informed her husband, who at once ordered his wife to leave for Mentone.

“She took the train, alone in her carriage, her servants occupying another compartment. She leaned against the doorway, a little sad, looking at the country and the passing villages, feeling herself isolated in life, abandoned, without children, almost without relatives, with a husband whose love was dead, and who, instead of coming with her, had just sent her off to the end of the world as he would send to the hospital a valet who was sick.

“At every station her man servant Ivan came to see if his mistress wanted anything. He was an old servant, blindly devoted, ready to carry out any order which she might give.

“The night fell, the train rolled onward at full speed. Her nerves were unstrung, she could not sleep. Suddenly she began counting the money

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which her husband had given her at the last moment. She opened her little bag and emptied the shining pieces of gold upon her knees.

"But all of a sudden a breath of cold air struck her in the face. She raised her head in surprise. The door had just swung open. The Comtesse Marie, at her wits' end, brusquely threw a shawl over the money which was spread upon her knees and waited. Some seconds passed, then a man appeared, bareheaded, wounded in the hand, breathing hard and in evening dress. He shut the door again, sat down, stared at his neighbor with glittering eyes, then wrapped a handkerchief round his wrist, from which the blood was flowing.

"The young countess felt herself grow weak with fright. This man had certainly seen her counting her gold, and he was come to murder and rob her.

"He kept staring at her, breathless, his face convulsed, ready no doubt to spring at her.

"He said suddenly:

" 'Have no fear, madame!'

"She answered nothing. She was unable to open her mouth, hearing her heart beat and her ears hum.

"He continued:

" 'I am not a criminal, madame.'

"She still said nothing, but in a brusque movement which she made her knees came close together, and her gold began to flow down upon the carpet as water flows from a gutter.

"The man, surprised, looked at this rivulet of metal, and suddenly he stooped to pick up the money.

"She rose in a mad fright, casting all her treasure to the ground, and ran to the door to throw herself out upon the track. But he understood what she

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was about to do, rushed forward, caught her in his arms, made her sit down by force, and holding her wrists, said: "Listen, madame, I am not a criminal, and the proof is that I am going to pick up this money and give it back to you. I am a lost man, a dead man, unless you help me to cross the frontier. I cannot tell you more. In one hour we shall be at the last Russian station; in one hour and twenty minutes we shall pass the boundary of the empire. If you do not rescue me I am lost. And yet, madame, I have neither killed nor stolen nor done anything against my honor. I swear it to you. I cannot tell you more.'

"And getting down on his knees, he picked up the gold, looking even for the pieces which had rolled under the seats. Then, when the little leather bag was once more full, he returned it to her without adding a word, and sat in the other corner of the carriage.

"They no longer stirred, either one or the other. She remained motionless and dumb, still ready to faint with terror, then little by little growing more at ease. As for him, he did not make a movement; he sat straight, his eyes fixed before him, very pale, as though he were dead. From time to time she looked at him suddenly and as quickly looked away. He was a man about thirty, very handsome, with every appearance of a gentleman.

"The train ran through the darkness, cast rending cries across the night, sometimes slackened its pace, then went off again at full speed. But suddenly it slowed up, whistled several times and stopped.

"Ivan appeared at the door to get his orders.

"The Comtesse Marie, with a trembling voice,

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gave one more look at her strange companion, then said to her servant abruptly:

“‘Ivan, you are to return to the count; I have no more need of you.’

“The man, speechless, opened his enormous eyes. He stammered:

“‘But—barine!’

“She added:

“‘No, you are not to come; I have changed my mind. I want you to remain in Russia. Here is money to return. Give me your cap and your cloak.’

“The old servant, quite overcome, bared his head and held out his cloak. He always obeyed without reply, being well accustomed to the sudden wishes and the irresistible caprices of his employers. And he withdrew, with tears in his eyes.

“The train went on, running towards the frontier.

“Then the Comtesse Marie said to her neighbor:

“‘These things are for you, monsieur; you are Ivan, my servant. I add only one condition to what I do: it is that you shall never speak to me, that you must not address me, either to thank me or for any purpose whatever.’

“The unknown bowed without uttering a word.

“Very soon they came to a stop once more, and officials in uniform visited the train. The countess offered them her papers, and pointing to the man seated at the back of the carriage:

“‘My servant, Ivan. Here is his passport.’

“The train went on.

“During the whole night they remained *tête-à-tête*, both silent.

“In the morning, when they stopped at a German

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station, the unknown got down. Then, standing straight in the doorway:

"'Forgive my breaking my promise, madame, but I have deprived you of your servant; it is right that I should fill his place. Have you need of anything?'"

"She answered coldly:

"'Go and find my maid.'

"He went to do so, then disappeared.

"When she got out of the carriage at a restaurant, she perceived him from a distance looking at her. They reached Mentone."

The doctor was silent a second, then resumed:

"One day, as I was receiving my patients in my office, I saw a tall young fellow come in and he said to me:

"'Doctor, I am here to ask news of the Comtesse Marie Baranow. I am, although she does not know me, a friend of her husband.'

"I replied:

"'She is doomed. She will never go back to Russia.'

"The man suddenly began to sob. Then he got up and went out, reeling like a drunkard.

"That night I told the comtesse that a stranger had come to inquire from me about her health. She seemed moved and told me all the story which I have just told you. She added:

"'That man, whom I do not know at all, now shadows me. I meet him every time I go out; he looks at me in a strange fashion, but he has never spoken.'

"She paused, then continued:

"'See, I would wager he is under my windows.'

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"She left her easy-chair, went to pull back the curtains, and, sure enough, she pointed out the man who had called to see me, now seated there on a bench upon the promenade, his eyes raised toward the hotel. He recognized us, rose and went off without once turning his head.

"From that time forward I witnessed an unusual and sorrowful thing—the silent love of these two beings, who did not even know one another.

"He loved her with the affection of a rescued animal, who is grateful and devoted until death. He came each day to say to me: 'How is she?' understanding that I had divined the secret. And he cried when he had seen her pass each day feebler and paler.

"She said to me:

"I have spoken but a single time to that strange man, and it seems to me as if I had known him for twenty years.'

"When they met, she would return his bow with a grave and charming smile. I could see that she was happy—she so alone and knowing herself doomed—I could see that she was happy to be loved like this, with such respect and such constancy in this sentimental manner, with this devotion which was ready for all things. And, notwithstanding, faithful to her high-flown resolve, she obstinately refused to receive him, to know his name, to speak with him. She said: 'No, no, that would spoil for me this curious friendship. We must remain strangers to one another.'

"As for him, he also was certainly a kind of Don Quixote, because he made no attempt to approach her. He meant to keep the absurd promise of never

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speaking, which he had made her in the railway carriage.

"Often, during her weary hours of weakness, she rose from her long chair and went to open the curtains a little way to see if he was there, beneath her window. When she had seen him, always motionless upon his bench, she went back and lay down with a smile upon her lips.

"She died one day about ten o'clock. As I was leaving the hotel he came up to me with a distracted face; he had already heard the news.

" 'I should like to see her, for one second, in your presence,' said he.

"I took him by the arm and went back into the house.

"When he was beside the couch of the dead woman he seized her hand and kissed it long and tenderly and then fled away like a madman."

The doctor again was silent, then continued:

"This is certainly the strangest railway adventure that I know. It must also be said that men sometimes take the wildest freaks."

A woman murmured, half aloud:

"Those two people were not so crazy as you think. They were—they were——"

But she could not continue, she was crying so. As we changed the conversation to calm her, we never knew what she had wished to say.

ON CATS

I WAS sitting the other day on a bench outside my door, with the sun shining full upon me, a bed of anemones in flower in front of me, and was reading a book that had recently appeared, a good book, a choice and charming work, *Le Tonnellier*, by Georges Duval. A large white cat, which belonged to the gardener, jumped on my knees, and in doing so closed the book, which I laid beside me in order to pet the animal.

It was hot. The odor of young flowers, a shy, light, intermittent odor, floated in the air, and I also felt passing breaths of cold coming from those great white peaks that I saw in the distance.

But the sun was scorching, penetrating, a heat that buries itself in the earth and gives it life, bursts open the seeds in order to vivify the sleeping germs within and the buds, so that the young leaves may unfold. The cat was rolling on its back, on my knees, with its paws extended, clawing the air, showing its pointed teeth beneath its lips and its green eyes peeping out through the slit of its half-closed lids. I patted and caressed the soft, nervous animal, supple as a piece of silk, gentle, warm, delicious and dangerous. She was purring delightedly, ready to bite, for she likes to claw as well as to be caressed. She stretched and turned her neck, and when I

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stopped touching her she sat up and passed her head under my raised hand.

I made her nervous and she made me nervous, too, for I both love and detest these charming and perfidious animals. It gives me pleasure to touch them, to pass my hand over their silky fur, that gives out electric sparks, to feel their warmth through the fine, exquisite texture of their coat. There is nothing softer, nothing that imparts to the skin a more delicate, refined and delicious sensation than the warm, electric fur of a cat. But this living coat makes my fingers tingle with a strange and fierce desire to strangle the beast that I am caressing. I feel in her the inclination that she has to bite me and to tear me. I feel and I catch this inclination like a fluid which she communicates to me; I catch it from this warm skin through the tips of my fingers, and it creeps along my nerves, along my limbs, up to my heart, up to my head; it fills me, it runs along my skin, and it makes me clench my teeth. And all the while I feel at the tips of my ten fingers a gentle sensation which penetrates and pervades my body.

And if the beast begins, if she bites me or claws me, I take her by the neck, give her a twist and fling her away like a sling-stone, so quickly and so brutally that she never has time to get even with me.

I remember that, even as a child, I loved cats, but yet with the sudden desire to strangle them with my little hands. One day I suddenly saw, at the far end of the garden, on the edge of the woods, something gray that was rolling over in the tall grass. I ran down to see; it was a cat caught in a trap, who was strangling, with the death-rattle in its throat. It was twisting its body, clawing the earth, jumping up and

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falling down again, helpless, and then it began all over again, and its quick, hoarse breathing sounded like the noise of a pump, a dreadful noise that is still ringing in my ears.

I might have taken a spade and cut the wire; I might have run for our man servant, or I might have gone to tell my father. But no; I did not stir from the spot, and with beating heart and trembling and cruel joy I watched it die, for it was a cat. Had it been a dog I would have cut the copper wire with my teeth, rather than let it suffer a moment longer.

And when the cat was dead, quite dead, and still warm, I went up to touch it and pull its tail.

Yet they are delicious, especially when, in stroking them, they rub against our skin, purr and roll over us, looking at us with their yellow eyes which never seem to see us, and it is then that we feel the insecurity of their affection, the perfidious egoism of their enjoyment.

Women also give us this sensation, charming, gentle women, with clear, false eyes, who have chosen us in order to get a taste of love. With them, when they open their arms, with pursed-up lips, when one presses them close, with beating heart, when one tastes the sweet, sensual joy of their tender caress, one knows very well that one is holding a cat, a cat with claws and nails, a perfidious, sly, amorous, hostile cat, who will bite when she is tired of kissing.

All the poets have loved cats. Baudelaire has sung of them divinely. We all know his admirable sonnet:

Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères
Aiment également, dans leur mûre saison,
Les chats puissants et doux, orgueil de la maison,
Qui comme eux sont frileux, et comme eux sédentaires.

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Amis de la science et de la volupté,
Ils cherchent le silence et l'horreur des ténèbres.
L'Erèbe les eût pris pour des coursiers funèbres
S'ils pouvaient au servage incliner leur fierté.

Ils prennent, en songeant, les nobles attitudes
Des grands sphinx allongés au fond des solitudes
Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin.

Leurs reins féconds sont plein d'étincelles magiques,
Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin,
Étoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques.

One day I had the strange sensation of having lived in the enchanted palace of the White Cat, a magic castle where ruled one of these sinuous, mysterious, disturbing animals, perhaps the only one, of all creatures, whose footfall one never hears.

It was last summer, on this same coast of the Mediterranean. It was atrociously warm at Nice, and I asked if the people here did not have a cool valley somewhere in the mountain where they could go for a breath of fresh air.

They told me of the valley of Thorenc. I wanted to see it. I first had to go to Grasse, the city of perfumes, of which I shall speak some day, describing how they make those essences and quintessences of flowers, which are worth up to two thousand francs a liter. Here I passed the evening and the night in an old hotel in the city, a second-class inn, where the quality of the food was as doubtful as the cleanliness of the rooms. I left in the morning.

The route lay through the mountains, skirting deep ravines, overtowered by sharp, sterile and wild peaks. I was wondering to what curious summer resort I had been sent, and was on the point of turning back to get to Nice that same evening when I suddenly perceived in front of me, on a mountain which seemed to shut off the entire valley, an im-

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mense and splendid ruin with its towers and crumbled walls outlined against the sky, a weird ruin of a dead fortress. It was the remains of an ancient commandery of the Knights Templars, who formerly held sway in the country of Thorenc.

On rounding this mountain I suddenly discovered a long green valley, fresh and restful. At the bottom of it there were meadows, running water and willows, and, on the slope, pines rose up to the sky.

Opposite the commandery, on the further side of the valley, but somewhat lower, there stands the Château of Quatre Tours, which was built about 1530 and is still inhabited. Its architecure does not however show any trace of the Renaissance.

It is a heavy and well-built pile of masonry, very strong in appearance and flanked by four watch-towers, as its name indicates.

I had a letter of introduction to the owners of this manor, who would not let me go on to the hotel.

The whole valley, which is really delightful, is one of the most charming summer places that one can imagine.

I went first through a kind of reception hall, the walls of which are covered with old Cordova leather, then through another room, where, by the light of my candle, I caught a glimpse of old portraits of ladies on the walls, those pictures of which Théophile Gautier has said :

I love to see you in your oval frames,
Yellow portraits of the beauties of old,
Holding somewhat pale roses in your hands,
As is fitting for century-old flowers.

Then I entered the room in which I was to sleep.
I turned to examine it as soon as I was alone. It

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was hung with old painted canvases, showing pink towers against blue backgrounds, and weird birds under foliage of precious stones.

My dressing-room was in one of the towers. The windows, which were wide, on the inside narrowed down as they passed through the entire thickness of the wall until they became mere slits on the outside, loopholes, those openings through which one killed the enemy. I closed my door, lay down and went to sleep.

And I dreamed; one always dreams somewhat of that through which he has passed during the day. I was travelling; I entered an inn, where I saw at a table before the fire a servant in gala livery and a mason, a curious fellowship, but which did not astonish me. They were talking of Victor Hugo, who had just died, and I took part in their conversation. I finally went to bed in a room whose door did not close, and suddenly I saw the servant and the mason tiptoeing toward my bed, armed with bricks.

I awoke suddenly, and it took me some minutes to collect myself. Then I recalled the events of the day before my arrival at Thorenc, the *châtelain's* amiable reception. . . . I was about to close my eyes when I saw—yes, I saw in the darkness of the night, in the middle of my room, at about the height of a man's head, two fiery eyes looking at me.

I reached for a match, and while I was striking it I heard a noise, a slight, soft noise, like that of the dropping of a damp roll of cloth, and when I had struck a light I saw nothing but a large table in the middle of the apartment.

I got up. I went through the two rooms, looked

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under my bed and into the closets, but found nothing.

I thought, therefore, that I had continued to dream for a few seconds after being awake, and I went to sleep again, not without some difficulty.

Again I began to dream. This time also I was travelling, but in the East, the land that I love, and I came to a Turk who was living in the open desert. He was a splendid Turk; not an Arab, but a Turk, large, amiable, charming, dressed in Turkish fashion, with a turban and a whole assortment of silks on his back, a real Turk of the Théâtre Français, who paid me compliments while offering me sweets, on a delicious divan.

Then a small negro boy led me to my room—all my dreams ended like this—a perfumed, sky-blue room, with skins on the floor, and before the fire—the idea of fire pursued me even to the desert—sitting in a low chair, a scantily clad woman, who was expecting me.

She was of the most pure Oriental type, with stars on her cheeks, her forehead and chin, immense eyes, an admirable body, a little brown but warm and captivating.

She looked at me, and I thought: "This is what I call hospitality. It is not in our stupid northern lands, our lands of absurd prudishness and odious, false modesty and imbecile morality, that one would receive a stranger in this fashion."

I went up to her and spoke, but she replied only by signs, not knowing a word of my language, which my Turk, her master, knew so well.

Then, on gathering together my thoughts, I saw that it was a cat, a large cat, snuggled up against

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my cheek and sleeping calmly. I let it lie, and, following its example, went to sleep once more.

When day broke it was gone, and I really thought that I had been dreaming, for I did not understand how it could have come into my room and gone out again, the door being locked.

When I told my adventure (not all of it) to my amiable host, he began to laugh and said: "He came in through the cat-hole," and, lifting up a curtain, he showed me a small, round black hole in the wall.

And I learned that almost all the old dwellings in this country have these long, narrow passages through the walls, which go from the cellar to the garret, from the maid's room to that of the master, and which constitute the cat the king and the master of the house.

He goes about as he likes, visiting his domain at his pleasure; he can sleep in all the beds, see everything and hear everything, know all the secrets, all the habits and all the scandals of the house. He is everywhere at home, as he can enter everywhere, the animal that goes about noiselessly, the silent prowler, the midnight promenader of hollow walls.

And I thought of this other verse of Baudelaire:

He is the homely spirit of the spot;
As judge he sees us all, and doth inspire
All things that pass in his domain;
Perhaps he is a fay—perhaps a god.



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